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THE LIFE OF JAMES ROBERTSON

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THE DOCTOR.
THE PROSPECTOR.
GLENGARRY SCHOOL DAYS.
THE MAN FROM GLENGARRY.
THE SKY PILOT.
BLACK ROCK.
THE ANGEL AND THE STAR.
GWEN.

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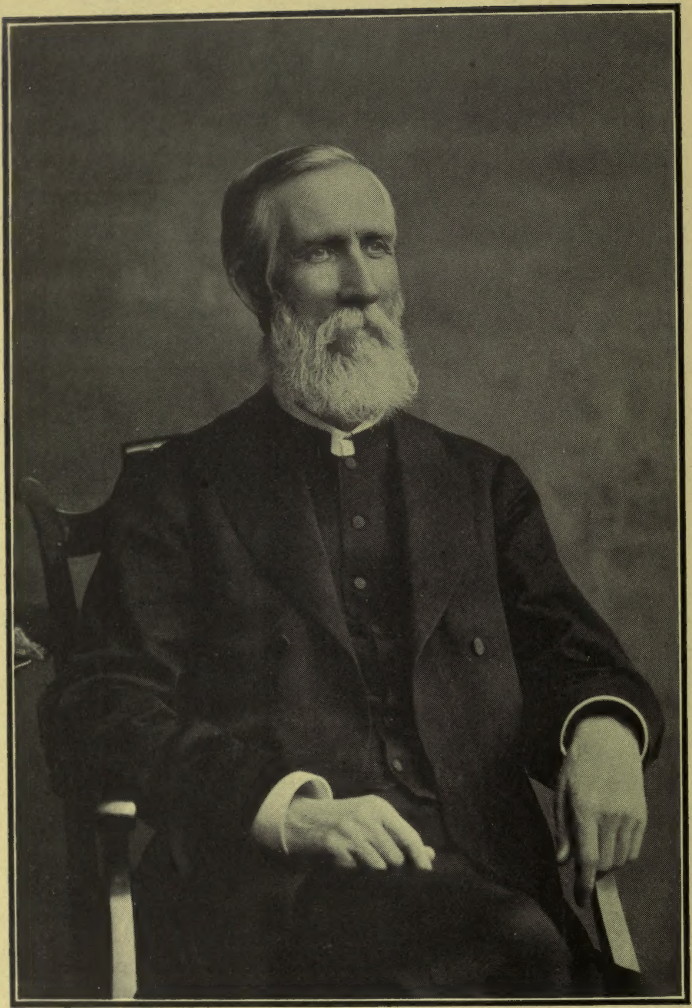

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J Robertson

The Life of James Robertson

Missionary Superintendent In the Northwest Territories

By
CHARLES W. GORDON
(*Ralph Connor*)

ILLUSTRATED

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PREFACE

TO say that the book is not worthy of its subject is to anticipate the verdict of every reader who knew and loved the great Superintendent. But to portray in fitting words his service and his worth, is beyond the pen of living man.

The book is my best attempt to set him forth as he was among us; not to praise him—he needs no praise—not to tell of his character nor to describe his work, but to show him living, loving, toiling, suffering, as we saw him. It is my humble hope that this, in some measure at least, I have achieved.

I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of his family, of brethren in the ministry, of friends, and especially of conveners of committees and officials of Presbyteries and other Church courts, who have placed their correspondence at my disposal, and who have assisted much with reminiscences and appreciations. Especially and gladly do I record my debt to Mrs. H. J. Parker, of Winnipeg, for invaluable aid in arranging and classifying material, for suggestion and criticism, for reading of manuscript and proof, and for help in many ways. And all the more gladly do I acknowledge her aid, that I know it was freely given in loving and grateful tribute to him whose life-story was being recorded.

The book is sent forth in the hope that it may inspire my brethren in the ministry with something of that spirit of devotion, so free of taint of self, that made Dr. Robertson what he was, and that it may, perhaps, determine some young man who has not yet made choice of his career, to give his life to his country and his God in this great service which commanded the life of this great Canadian.

CHARLES W. GORDON.

Winnipeg, November, 1908.

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The Life of James Robertson

I

DULL

OF all Scotland's lovely valleys, none is lovelier than that through which flows the lordly Tay, and of the Tay valley there is no lovelier bit than that which stretches west and north from the town of Aberfeldy. Out from the mountains flows the river, down the wide valley, past sloping fields rich and fertile with their cosy farmsteads, sheep-runs, lands high and bare, decked out with birches, firs and beeches, singly and in groups and plantations, past great houses set within their policies, past pretty villages, quaint and straggling, every mile rich in surpassing beauty and historic interest.

But there is one spot where it were worth while to pause, for it is the birthplace of a great man, whose name is written in large letters over the Canadian West. Four miles west of the town of Aberfeldy the river takes a turn about one of the Grampian spurs which ends here in a bold bluff crag. At the foot of the rock, on the river's north bank, lies one of those quaint straggling villages. This bluff crag is the Rock of Dull, and this straggling group of houses huddling at its base is the village of Dull. In this village James Robertson was born.

The glory of the village lies in the past. The ruins strewn everywhere about, gaunt and bare or half-covered with kindly turf, proclaim that. It is an ancient village getting its name from the ninth abbot of Iona who, when dying, commanded that they should bear his body eastward towards Strathray till the withes by which the coffin hung, should break. At the foot of a precipitous rock on the north side of the Tay the withes broke. There they laid his saintly body to rest, and from the breaking of the withes, *dhullan*, they named the spot "Dhull," modern Dull. The place became a famous educational and ecclesiastical centre. A college was established and a monastery founded, with right of sanctuary attached, within a radius marked by crosses, of which one, sorely battered, still stands in the village. In the time of Crinan, the fighting Bishop of Dunkeld, son-in-law to King Malcolm II, and father of Duncan, the unfortunate victim of Macbeth's ambition, the landholdings pertaining to the monastery of which Crinan was tenth abbot, were greatly extended. The memory of this monastery demesne is preserved in the Appin *Abbatania* of Dull. But long before the Reformation the monastery was dissolved and the college transferred to St. Andrew's, thus becoming the nucleus of the oldest of the Scottish universities.

In those great old days Dull was not only an educational and ecclesiastical centre; it was a populous, commercial metropolis as well, with streets devoted to certain trades and offering the principal produce market for the surrounding district. But now of this ancient greatness, educational, ecclesiastical and commercial, all that remains is the parish school, the parish church, itself a pre-Reformation relic recently restored to its former splendour, the straggling village, and those eloquent gaunt or turf-clothed ruins. Unchanged by the passing years, the old gray Rock abides, and the flowing river, for the generations of men come and go, leaving ruins behind to show where they have been and where they have wrought! Ruins? Yes, but more than ruins. For lives of men are more enduring than grim rocks and flowing rivers. They never die, but in a people's character and in a people's influence and in a people's work in their home lands and in lands far across the sea, they live eternally.

II

THE BOY ROBERTSON

THE Robertson clan is numerous and widely distributed throughout Scotland. A very humble member of the clan was James Robertson who, leaving his father's farm of Lurgan, near Dull, went up to Loch Tayside and took to himself a wife, a farmer's daughter, one Christina McCallum, and settled to work upon the Breadlabane estates near by, thence to a farm for a time, later to work as a day-labourer for a brother of Sir Robert Menzies. Afterwards he ventured to take a small sheep-farm, but all along it was a struggle, and he never made very much out of it.

To James Robertson and Christina McCallum were born six sons and two daughters. Of these, James, the subject of this biography, was the third child and son, born April 24, 1839. His father was a "quiet" man, hard-toiling, God-fearing, patient and persistent, whose only pride was his honesty, and whose only ambition was to rear his family "respectably" till they could do for themselves. Of the mother something more must be said. For it was to her that the boy James owed his eager, ambitious spirit, his indomitable will, his shrewd common sense, and that genius for getting things done which distinguished him in after-life. "She was a little woman," writes one of her daughters. "There was nothing that any woman could do that she could not do, and when it was done it needed no second doing." She was, indeed, a rare woman, alert of mind and quick of speech, devoted to the well-being of her family, toiling early and late in the unceasing struggle for daily bread, but cherishing secretly an ambition for her children that became the controlling force in her life. From his earliest days she had unbounded faith in the future of her boy James, and this, with her native pride, made her impatient of anything like criticism of the lad. One record says that James Robertson was one of the most ragged children who went to the Dull school. One day a neighbouring farmer having some words with the mother, reflected somewhat scornfully upon the boy's somewhat ragged appearance. With a quick flash of her Highland and family pride, the mother retorted, "Indeed, and very likely my son will some day think himself low enough to dip his spoon in the same basin with any of your family."

She was clever not only with her tongue, but with hand and foot. It is told of her that being in need of a shawl of particular make and not being able to buy it in Dull, she walked all the way to Crieff, a distance of twenty-seven miles over the hills, to secure the shawl. She was back with her purchase the same day.

From the very first the mother saw that of all her children it was James who was possessed of the greatest aptness for learning, and so, as far as was consistent with the necessities of the home, he attended the parish school, his attendance being interrupted by the demands made upon him for herding on the neighbouring estates, for acting as gillie in the shooting time, or for the performance of household work while his mother was employed upon the neighbouring farms. But in spite of all they could do, his early school days were much broken, not only by the need of his labour in the home and in the fields, but by a severe illness as well, which seriously interfered with continuous study. At twelve years of age, however, the boy began something like steady attendance at school, and when the opportunity so long delayed came to him at last, he went eagerly at his books.

He was distinguished for a memory of remarkable tenacity, and by a perseverance unconquerable in the pursuit of knowledge. We are told he took little part in the school games, preferring to walk about with a book in his hand. But in spite of this he was well liked by the boys, and as a friend says of him, "He was no duffer, but enjoyed fun as much as any of them." Though even of temper and self-controlled, he was a "terrible fighter," his master says, "when fighting was to be done." So, though he won no distinction on the playground, he held his own with his mates, and easily carried the palm as being the most notable scholar of the district school. His old master, Alexander McNaughton, writes as follows:

"James was very often taken from his lessons to help his mother in household work when she would be employed at outdoor toil on neighbouring farms, yet, despite this, he outstripped his classmates, especially in Latin, arithmetic, and geometry. He had a clear head, great powers of concentration, and a memory so retentive that he seldom forgot what was worth remembering. Of all the boys whom I have put through the scholastic mill in a period of forty years, none gave me more pleasure or raised my hopes of his success higher than did James Robertson."

When he was about fifteen years of age there was a contest instituted between schools of the three parishes. The best scholars from each of the schools competed, and, with them, some lads who had been two years at the college. There seemed small chance for the Dull scholar, handicapped as he was by his late beginning and his broken attendance. But undaunted, he entered the competition with all the energy he possessed of body, mind and spirit. The great day arrived, and at it they went and continued at it the whole day long. As the hours pass the combatants fall out one by one till a college lad and Robertson of Dull are left alone. On into the night they continue the struggle until, dazed but undaunted, at two o'clock next morning, Robertson is declared the winner. "He never let go what he once took a grip of," says another friend, a significant forecast, surely, of a later characteristic.

He was good at Latin, and though Gaelic was his mother tongue and the only tongue he knew to converse in till he was sixteen years of age, he was good at book English, too ; but his strong point was arithmetic. When he was about sixteen, a problem that had given some trouble in the college in Edinburgh was sent down to the master at Dull.

"If any of them can solve it," said the master, "it will be Robertson." And to Robertson he gave it, who took it home and fell upon it. When his father was going to bed that night he said to his boy :

"Are you not comin' to your bed, lad?"

"Yes, after a while," replied the boy, hardly looking up from his slate. But when next morning the father came in to light the fire, James rose from the spot where he had been left sitting the night before, with the solution of the problem in his hands. No wonder that he was the delight and pride of the master and of his fellows in the school !

But as the years went on, times with the Robertsons grew worse and the mother's dream of a college education for her son, in which he secretly shared, seemed to become less and less likely to be realized, till in 1854 a terrible storm fell upon the Tayside, burying flocks and herds and cots beneath its masses of snow, and bringing ruin to many a small sheep-farmer. There followed a period of great depression, so great, indeed, that James Robertson, who had lost almost all that he had, lost heart as well, and resolved to leave his native land and try his fortune in Canada.

Canada was at that day a far-off place and wild, and it is almost impossible for us to imagine the feelings with which these Scottish people, with their passionate love for their native hills and their yearning for their "ain fowk," contemplated emigration to the backwoods of Canada so far and so fearsome. But, while Scotland held all or almost all that their hearts could cling to, Scotland had little to offer the labouring man in the way of reward for present toil, and less in the way of hope of future advancement for his family. Then, too, the word that came back from James McCallum, Mrs. Robertson's brother who had gone to Canada some years before, was encouraging. He had done well for himself and his family out there. So, after long deliberation and much prayer, and after earnest consultation with their minister, though with few others, for the Robertsons kept "themselves to themselves," the resolve was taken and to Canada they would go.

At this juncture arose a question of the greatest importance to the family as a whole, but especially to the boy James and to his mother. Shortly before their departure the parish minister brought an offer from the trustees of what was known as the Stewart bequest, the proceeds of which were to be devoted to the education of bright lads in the district, to undertake the education of James if he would remain behind. It was a time of sore trial for them all, but at length one and all agreed that it could not be. Not even for the college education, so long desired and so toilfully sought, could they bear to leave the boy behind.

So, in 1855, James Robertson and his family set sail in the *George Roger* for Canada, and settled beside James McCallum in the township of East Oxford, Ontario.

Among his few possessions the lad carried as his most priceless treasure the certificate from his old master, as follows :

"That James Robertson attended the parish school of Dull from December, 1851, to date hereof, and was educated in English, reading, grammar, writing, arithmetic, geography, and religious knowledge, that he acquired a reasonable acquaintance with the elements of Latin and was reading Cæsar and Ovid, that he studied mathematics with much success, having mastered the first four books of Euclid's elements and algebra as far as quadratic equations, that his progress in the above enumerated branches was more than usually rapid, and his moral character and conduct in the highest degree satisfactory ; but notwithstanding his being a young man of modest and unassuming manners, his natural abilities were conspicuous as well during ordinary school exercises as on examination days, on which occasions he invariably carried away the highest prizes. That he is leaving this locality for the purpose of emigrating to America and that whether he be there employed in teaching the young, in which capacity he has had some experience while assisting me, or in any other occupation to which Providence may call him, I feel sure that his wonted diligence and perseverance will accompany him and success crown his labours, is certified at the schoolhouse of Dull, in the county of Perth, by Alexander McNaughton, parish schoolmaster, May 9, 1855."

With a certificate of this kind from a parish schoolmaster of Mr. McNaughton's well-known ability and reserve of speech, James might indeed front much. On a visit to his native parish many years afterwards he writes as follows to his old master :

"*No. 20 Mound Place, Edinburgh, April 2, 1897.*
"MY DEAR MR. MCNAUGHTON :—

"I have never lost my interest in the school of Dull or in its pupils, and I anticipate no small pleasure in my intended visit to renew acquaintance with scenes once familiar. Rivers and roads, hills and woods continue the same, although familiar faces have disappeared and strange faces have taken their place. I wish, therefore, to send some three pounds' worth of books to my old school in prizes to the pupils attending there now and I would like very much if you would oblige me by selecting them. I have perfect confidence in your judgment as to the books and the subjects for which they are to be given. I mention three pounds, but should three pounds not do justice to the school, make it four or even five. To the teacher and not to the school as such do I owe what of good I got in Dull, but yet this is the only way I can indicate that I have not forgotten the scenes of early days.

"With much respect I am, dear sir,
"Yours sincerely,
"JAMES ROBERTSON."

Western Ontario was, at that time, but sparsely settled. The Great Western Railway had not long been opened. At the front, along river and lake, settlements clustered, but in the backwoods counties, vast sections of the forest primeval remained unbroken and immigrants, pushing their way past the homes of early settlers, found themselves in the midst of this unbroken forest, and faced with the labour of hewing themselves homes out of its gloomy and terrible depths.

The first summer was spent in enlarging the clearing upon their farm. The winter following, James with the other boys, chopped cord-wood and hauled it to the neighbouring village of Woodstock. For a part of the following summer he laboured again at farm-work, but for a few weeks of that summer he walked night and morning a distance of six miles to attend school at Woodstock, carrying his dinner with him. When the time for the teachers' examinations arrived, James asked for the privilege of writing. His teacher, however, objected because of his short attendance upon school. The boy was not to be balked. Too long had he had the university and college in view. Other boys were making their way, therefore why should not he? He went to his minister, the Rev. Mr. McDermot, of Chalmers Church, Woodstock, and stated his case, showing his much prized certificate from the parish schoolmaster of Dull. The minister was greatly impressed, not only with the certificate he presented, but also with his determined spirit. The boy had, indeed, a "terrible jaw." He tried to persuade young Robertson that it would be wiser for him to delay his attempt, urging that he was not used to the Canadian style of work and of examinations. It was all in vain. Robertson would not be stopped. He only wanted a chance, and finally the minister went to the teacher and persuaded him to let the lad have his way. That "terrible jaw" of the boy had appealed to the minister. The teacher agreed and the papers were given to Robertson who, when the examination was over, went back to his home and his work at the clearing of the land and the gathering in of the crops.

The weeks passed and there was no news of the examination. Young Robertson was disappointed. He had been too impatient and too confident of himself, and it would have been wiser to have taken the minister's advice. It was his first failure, and the lad took it quietly enough, but with a keen sense of defeat.

One day in the late fall, his younger brother, Archie, was sent with another lad to a neighbouring post-office. Hearing his name, the postmistress called out to him :

"Have you a brother James?"

"Yes."

"Then here's a letter for him that's been here for three months," and handed out a long blue envelope.

It was the teacher's certificate, long coveted and long despaired of. The envelope was opened in the presence of the family and became the occasion of a suppressed jubilation. But afterwards the boy carried it out to the back of the house and there gloated upon it.

And now for a school. The Corner School where the Governor's Road meets the Tenth Line of East Zorra, was vacant. Robertson applied for it, sending in his certificate. The boy had not walked his six miles back and forth, to and from Woodstock, without being noticed. He got his school and began work as teacher in January of 1857, at the age of eighteen.

He was a raw, awkward, uncouth lad. His clothes were made by the travelling tailor, and none too elegant. His manners and speech were abrupt almost to the point of rudeness at times, but he carried into his work a purpose to get the best out of himself and out of that little company of boys and girls that faced him in the Corner School. He was stern in discipline—a distinguished member of the House of Commons, the Hon. James Sutherland, wrote that he remembered well a birching he had at his hands—but he seldom needed to use the birch. He kept his pupils so busy that they had little time for mischief. He filled them with his own enthusiasm for work. One of his pupils, who lived at the teacher's boarding place, writes:

"One evening we came upon a problem in Gray's Arithmetic about oxen grazing in a field and the grass growing uniformly, the question being how long the grass in the field would support the oxen. This was one of the knotty questions of that day. The solution not coming as easily as was customary and bedtime having arrived, I proposed retiring. I can see him yet, how he rose up,

Dr. Robertson
Teacher at Woodstock

put off his coat and sat down to it. I went to bed and was soon in the land where such problems cease to trouble a boy, but after some time he wakened me up, solution in hand, and sought to make plain to me, still drowsy with sleep, the points of the problem. There was no shirking and no scamping in the work done in that school."

The teacher's boarding place was the house of Mr. Peter McLeod, who was a distiller in a small way. This distilling industry throughout Ontario was primitive in its nature and primitive in operation. It was the custom for the farmers to take their "tailings" of wheat and rye and barley to the mill in Woodstock, where they were chopped and made ready for Peter McLeod's still. Peter was an honest man and made honest whiskey, part of which he gave to the farmers for their chopped tailings, and the rest he retailed at twenty-five cents a gallon. Oh, blissful days for drouthy Scots! Of course, to all in the house the whiskey was as free as water, for Peter was as kindly as he was honest, so the young teacher with the rest was welcome to his "fill" of whiskey. In those good old days there were no faddy notions about total abstinence and that sort of thing. Whiskey was not so much rated among the luxuries, but among the necessities of life. No house could afford to be without it. Hospitality demanded that it should welcome the coming and speed the parting guest. At the logging-bees and raisings, the chopping and the threshing, whiskey was a plain necessity, while at weddings, christenings, and funerals, it was equally indispensable. For who would be so mean as to fail to provide what would lend wings to dancing feet, pledge life and prosperity to the newly christened babe, and bring comfort to the heart in sorrow? Wrong? What wrong could there be in honest whiskey made by Peter McLeod out of their own wheat and rye and barley? And didn't the ministers and the elders and all godly men take their decent glass, asking God's blessing over it as over any other good creature of His? Tut, man, what would you have! And what if some of the weak-headed did take "a wee drap" too much! No blame to the whiskey for that, surely, but to the men who were not fit to use it. And as for hurting any one, look at Peter McLeod himself, who had barrels of it and who dipped it out with a dipper. Did any one ever see him the worse? Not a bit.

This was the temperance atmosphere of the day, and in Peter McLeod's distillery it was that the young Scotch Canadian lad took up his abode on his first venture from home. But it was Peter McLeod's distillery, too, that made young Robertson a total abstainer for life, and an enthusiast in the propagation of total abstinence principles. For he had seen that same Peter McLeod's whiskey, good and honest as it was, make beasts out of men, turn the kindly gatherings of neighbours into scenes of revelry and brawling, and, indeed, not even the sacred ranks of the church-members were safe from its dreadful inroads. Peter McLeod might take his own whiskey in sober moderation and with little hurt to him, but there were others who could only drink it to their ruin and degradation. Robertson became a rabid teetotaler, and it says something for the influence of his personality that a young man living in the same house with him became, like him, a total abstainer. Long years afterwards that young man, now an honoured minister of the Gospel, wrote:

"Robertson always acted the missionary, and I was one of his converts to total abstinence on principle. We did not take or make any pledge, but I can thank God for meeting Robertson when I was young."

III

HIS FIRST COMMUNION

THE joyful and awful solemnities of a Highland Communion are no longer known except in the more remote parishes of Canada and perhaps of Scotland. But fifty years ago the Communion Season was a great event in a Highland congregation. It was, indeed, the great ecclesiastical event of the year. It was more; it was the social event as well. It was the chronological pivot of the seasons. By it men calculated their days. A month before the appointed date, due intimation was made of the approach of the sacred time, and as the announcement fell from their minister's lips, the congregation experienced their first solemn thrill of self-examination. The ministers from a distance, who six months before had been engaged to assist, were reminded of the engagement and assigned their parts. As the day drew near, the people gave themselves to a general cleaning up both of hearts and of homes. Housewives were especially active "redding up" and stocking larders in preparation for a generous hospitality. For from far and near came the people without thought of invitation, assured of a welcome; every home stood wide open and every table was free.

The season opened on Thursday with a solemn fast, the sermons of the day being especially fitted to assist in the serious business of self-examination. There was no trifling with facts, no glossing over of sins, no juggling with conscience. With truly terrible and heart-shaking eloquence, the preacher pursued the agonized sinner from one "refuge of lies" to another, till, at the foot of the Cross, humble, broken, penitent, but justified by faith, he found peace with God. It was a tremendous experience and through this experience of the fast day the intending communicants passed, emerging as from a bath of fire, with a sense of cleanness unspeakably precious, prepared to enjoy the "further exercises" with chastened exultation. Who that has known this experience can ever forget it? And who can say how much is lost out of the Church's life by the passing of the Communion Season. To the men of that day there were great and awful verities behind the words "holiness," "sin," "redemption"; and the Church from whose vision these verities have faded has lost the secret of moral and spiritual dynamic.

Friday was the Question Day, the great field-day of Presbyterian democracy, when the ministers and the "men" upon equal terms discussed high themes in their purely theological as well as in their more practical bearing.

On Saturday the "tokens" were distributed to the "intending communicants," and as each went up before the assembled congregation to receive the token of admission to the Table, a solemn sense of responsibility deepened upon the soul.

Then came the Sabbath day, the great day of the feast, when the Table was spread and, after the action sermon and the fencing of the Table, in solemn quiet the sacred emblems were distributed to a people who, with hearts humble, chastened, cleansed, were waiting in glad expectation for the coming of the Master.

The season closed with the Thanksgiving on Monday, a service in which the deepest, sweetest, tenderest emotions flooded the heart. Then from the "Mount of Ordinances" the people descended to the plane of common life with hearts subdued but strong and jubilant and ready for the pilgrimage and the conflict.

He reads Scottish religious life only upon the sheerest surface who finds in it chiefly gloom and heart-heaviness. Gravity there was, for men were facing serious issues earnestly; sorrows, too, the poignant sorrow of honest hearts conscious of their sin. But the deepest emotions, sacredly guarded from curious eyes and indulged with due moderation, were warm gratitude, love, and humble joy.

Young Robertson had been possessed from childhood of deep religious feeling, with a profound reverence for things sacred—the Church, the Word of God, the Sabbath day, but especially the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. He shared with the Highlanders of his time their almost superstitious veneration of that sacred ordinance, and the mere thought of making a public profession of his faith, filled him with awe. In the common opinion of the day, to "go forward" was to assume a most solemn and even dreadful responsibility. To many, doubt was a sign of depth of spiritual experience and of insight into the mysteries; fear was the symbol of profound knowledge of the subtleties of Satan and of the sin native to the human soul. Any indication of assurance or confidence towards God was regarded with suspicion. Consequently, the privileges of "full communion" were supposed to belong only to men of years and of ripe experience. That a young man should take upon himself such a responsibility was regarded as savouring of that ignorance and presumption characteristic of the heart as yet unacquainted with its own possibilities of error and unregenerate pride. And so at a Highland Communion, among those who surrounded the Table, there were comparatively few with young faces. These were to be found in the side pews or in the gallery, regarding with often sadly wistful eyes the observance of the sacred rite.

But with Robertson the sense of duty was overpoweringly strong and, though he shared to a large degree the opinions, the superstitions, and the feelings of his time and of his people, the fact that he had, as teacher of the district school, stepped out into life for himself and assumed the responsibilities of manhood, laid upon his conscience the duty of making profession of the faith that was in him.

As an adherent of Chalmers Church, Woodstock, he had made it his weekly custom to attend both morning and evening services, although this involved a walk of eight miles every Sabbath day. Having made up his mind as to his duty, Robertson immediately approached his minister, the Rev. Mr. McDermot, as an applicant for admission to the church. The minister encouraged him in his purpose and in due time he was accepted by the Session. The week preceding the Communion was one of unusual solemnity to the young man. His thoroughgoing nature, his religious training, his own fidelity to conscience, impelled him to rigid and unflinching self-examination. His motives were viewed and reviewed with the exactest scrutiny. His state of heart was considered with anxious care. His daily life was scanned with searching thoroughness. The experience of that week Robertson never forgot. But the Sabbath morning found him calmly resolved. With a young friend he set off early for his two mile walk to the church. The memory of that serene Sabbath morning is still vivid in the heart of his young friend who thus writes:

"We started as usual to walk two miles to church. As we went along the Governor's Road there was a bush, 'Light's Woods,' on the south side of the road. Robertson suggested that we turn aside into the bush, not saying for what purpose. We penetrated it a short distance when, with a rising hill on our right and on comparatively level ground, the tall maples waving their lofty heads far above us and the stillness of the calm, sunny day impressing us with a sense of the awful, we came to a large stone. Robertson proposed that we engage in prayer. We knelt down together. He prayed that he might be true to the vows he was about to take, true to God and ever faithful in His service, and then he prayed for me also. This scene was deeply impressed upon my mind. We rose up, put on our hats, regained the road and went on our way to church. The youngest member at the Table that day was the young master from the Corner School."

Uniting with the church, with characteristic energy, he set himself to make good the profession of his faith. He took up Sabbath-school work, taught a class himself, and was frequently called upon to review the lesson before the whole school. But even at this early day, Robertson had the missionary's eye for the people of the byways and hedges. There were in Woodstock at this time a large number of Gaelic-speaking people from Cape Breton. To these he became a missionary, visiting them and conducting services for them on the Sabbath day in their own language. This instinct for the neglected and forgotten it was that became so large a part of his equipment for the great work that fell to him in later life.

Chalmers Church, Woodstock, may be allowed some laudable pride in the fact that the two great representative missionaries of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in both foreign and home lands—Mackay of Formosa and Robertson of Western Canada—took their first Communion in fellowship with that congregation.

IV

HIS FIRST AND ONLY LOVE

THE reputation gained as a teacher and especially as a master of discipline, during his two and a half years in the Corner School, secured for him a larger sphere of work in a school near Innerkip, where for three years, from 1859 to 1863, he gave himself with the same vigour and conscientiousness to his work as had made him so successful in his first school. His experience as teacher had developed him in many ways, but more particularly had wrought in him a self-confidence and a mastery of himself and others that led him to take a position of influence in the community. He is still remembered by those who were his pupils at that time, for the fearless and indomitable spirit which distinguished him above others. "He was afraid of nothing," writes one of his pupils, "man, beast or devil. There was a fractious colt on the farm where he boarded which none of us dared to handle. Robertson mastered him and rendered him tractable." The same spirit that made him wrestle all night long with the Edinburgh problem and afterwards with that of the oxen and the grass would not let him rest before any unconquered difficulty. "Frequently," writes the same pupil, "I remember when there were tough, gnarled pieces of wood lying around the yard that had baffled the skill and prowess of others to make stove wood out of them, he would go at them with that vim and vigour which later became so characteristic of the man, and in a little while he would stand victorious over their scattered members. What seemed to others impossible, that was the thing that had a peculiar charm for him."

He had his own opinions and was not to be moved from them without reason by any man soever, no matter how great he might be. His minister tells us that at a Sunday-school picnic where some three or four hundred people were assembled, the orators of the day, both lay and clerical, had been emphasizing the importance of aiming high, pointing to high places in Church and State which might be attained. Not a bit abashed by the high standing or the eloquence of ministers or Members of Parliament who had preceded him, the young teacher of Innerkip, in the rough eloquence of common sense, proceeded to demonstrate the impracticable nature of much of the counsel given. "You cannot all attain high positions; there are not enough to go round. You cannot all be preachers or premiers, but you can all do thoroughly and well what is set you to do, and so fit yourselves for some higher duty, and thus by industry and fidelity and kindness you can fill your sphere in life and at the last receive the 'well done' of your Lord."

His stay in Innerkip was marked by two events which determined for him the course and quality of his after-life. It was at this time that he finally decided upon his life calling. From his childhood, he had shared with his mother the hope that he might become a minister, though, after the manner of their race, they never openly to each other expressed such a hope. It was his experience in Chalmers Church as teacher and superintendent of Sabbath-school, and as missionary to the Gaelic Cape Breton folk settled in Woodstock, that quickened his desire and strengthened his hope into a firm resolve to be a preacher of the Gospel. This aim he henceforth kept steadily before him, and to its accomplishment he bent every energy of his being.

It was while he was in Innerkip, too, that another event befell, whose influence followed him through all his days. He had the happy fortune to meet and to promptly fall in love with a sweet-faced, leal-hearted young maiden. About a mile from the school where Robertson taught, lived John Cowing, a well-to-do farmer of sturdy north of England stock. It had been the custom for the schoolmasters of previous days to make their home at Mr. Cowing's house, but upon the departure of the last teacher it was decided in the family circle that this custom must end, so the new teacher went to board in the village. But a week of his boarding-house was enough for him, and on Monday evening, as the young lady of the house was washing up the tea dishes, looking out of the window she saw the teacher coming up from the road with her father, evidently engaged in earnest conversation. Well she knew what this meant. Disgusted and indignant, she declared to her mother that they were not to have any man boarding with them, and besides, she was "sick and tired of having to make up and carry every day to school the teacher's dinner." The father brought the young man in and introduced him to his wife and daughter ; an introduction it was, big with result to both the young people. As the young man looked into the sparkling black eyes that looked back at him perhaps none too kindly, the hour of fate struck for him. This young girl, looking back after forty-five years of life, describes their first meeting in the following words of exquisite and touching simplicity :

"It was in the Fall of 1859 that my future husband, then a young man of about twenty-one years, came to our section to teach school, where he used his talents and influence for the good of all with whom he came in contact. He was an excellent teacher, loved and respected by parents and pupils alike. He soon found his way to my father's and mother's home, for the former teachers had not been strangers there. He said afterwards that when he saw me for the first time that day in my own home, he determined that I should be his. The task proved to be not as easy as may have seemed, but he had made up his mind, and, as in after-years in more important matters, when he won in spite of difficulties, so it was then. He poured forth his wealth of love and affection and compelled me to love him in return as I had never loved before. Of course we had to wait, but the time did not seem long. It was unalloyed bliss. Three years of school, of walks and talks, and when he left for college there were the letters, the visits, the hopes and aspirations and preparations, and, with all, at times a tinge of sadness lest I was not quite worthy of it all."

Ten years after that eventful evening, the young man writes a love-letter so characteristic in its manliness and tenderness, and so revealing of the loyalty and patient fidelity of both, as to be worth reproducing:

"*Union Theological Seminary,*
"*New York City, Sept. 23, 1868.*

"My dear Batty:—

"To-day is your birthday, as you call it, or what others would perhaps style the anniversary of it, and I think I must write you a short letter. It was almost the first thought that came into my mind this morning after I arose, but why or how I do not know, for I had not thought of it the night before. I was thankful, however, that it was so, and I only regretted that you were so far away and wished that you were near. But why regret what we all know must be for the best. I hope you are as happy as I wish you on this day, and I hope you may witness its return often and find pleasure in it and that it may be mine to help you to make it ever happier. I felt well all day, I think, from the thought that it was your birthday, and consequently the day has been to me half a holiday. Were I near you, it would have been no half, but a whole holiday. A whole holiday in New York, however, with the work of the Session commenced, is not to be thought of, especially when one is alone with no kindred spirit to make up what is really needed to make all go off well.

"I was going to add, and I may just as well do it, that I hope this will be the last time that I cannot be with you on the return of this day. It is God's mercy that we cannot see so very far down the way. This is, of course, hoping, that is all we can do for the future except active preparation in the present. It will be soon ten years since I made your acquaintance first. You know I loved you at first sight. During that time considerable changes have taken place. I have ceased to be the Innerkip teacher, the very house in which I taught has been removed. I have passed through my grammar school studies. I have lived in Toronto for three years and am now spending one in New York, and still I think my first impression of you has not changed except in one way, namely, that it is deeper. The lines that appeared then drawn on the surface, are now cut deep into the solid, so that effacing them would be destruction. It might almost appear reckless to choose on the instigation of an impulse, but never have I regretted my choice, except at those times when its object appeared to be beyond my reach. Wherever I am, I can look back on my choice and now turn to the object of my love with a warmth of feeling, the pleasure of which can be experienced but not expressed. Long engagements are considered an evil. I really think that, generally speaking, they are so. Long engagements like mine are not. Could I be free I would not. Had I the course to pursue again with my present experience, I would act in that respect as I have done. My engagement has been to me a source of profit, the fountain of my affections has been kept open, and while I have been living and acting among men, my heart has been educated as well as my intellect, and this I consider a real benefit. Had I been unengaged till now, I think I would stand a good chance of being a bachelor for life. Study is fascinating to me. But now things are different and I am glad of it. Of course, your part in the matter has not been so easy as mine. You had to wait, while with me there has been no waiting. When you consented to take me you consented to wait these long years, for you were ready to marry then. The exciting activity of work you lacked, and your part was harder to bear. Work may not appear easy, yet it is a relief when you are called upon to lend a hand rather than stand and look at another work. I had the work, you the looking on, waiting till I was done. Your part appears the more difficult. I hope for your sake as well as my own that this waiting will soon cease. None can wish this more than I.

"But I must bid you good-night, merely asking you to send one photo out of your album. I could have given a good deal to have had it to-day, and regretted my having forgotten it since I came. Forget me not as you are not forgotten.

"Yours ever,
"JAMES."

He is no master in the art of writing love-letters perhaps, but he is a master in the fine art of loving, and in this fine art his heart never loses its skill through all the after-years.

V

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

FOR three years Robertson taught the Innerkip school, working hard meantime in private study preparing for his university course, and giving full service besides to his church and Sabbath-school. They were years of strenuous toil, but toil was his delight, nor did the days ever drag, for they were lightened by love. In 1863, he matriculated at the University of Toronto, but of his university career little is known. While not a brilliant scholar, he took a good general stand, being devoted particularly to mathematics, modern languages, and metaphysics. But while he won little distinction in the class lists, he laid very solid foundation for his future study and developed in a marked degree the student instinct and habit which kept his mind fresh and open to truth, and made him throughout his laborious life keenly alive to all that was new in every department of knowledge.

His photograph taken during his college course shows him a full-bearded man, grave, thoughtful, mature of face, and withal somewhat stern and rugged. His clothes were not of the most fashionable cut, the travelling tailor at home despising all newfangled notions, and his whole appearance was such as to expose him to the ridicule of the smart and "sporty" set. But, as a fellow student, who afterwards came to hold him in high regard, writes:

"Though he wore his trousers at high water mark, and though his hats were wonderful to behold and his manners abrupt and uncouth, still 'Jeemsie,' as he was dubbed by the irreverent, commanded the respect of the giddiest of the lot for his fine heart and for his power of pungent speech, for he would fire words at you like a cannon-ball. And for the ridicule of the boys, Jeemsie cared not a tinker's curse."

He kept himself aloof from much of the college life. His earnest purpose and thoughtful, intense nature found little congenial in the college societies and the college sports and politics of the day. But if he took little interest in these sides of the university life, when there was anything serious afoot Robertson was not found wanting. Hence, when at the close of the American Civil War, rumours began to run of invasion of Canada by the Fenians, he joined the University Corps of the Queen's Own Rifles and gave himself diligently to drill, so that when news of the actual raid came he was ready with his fellow students to obey his country's call to arms. The following extracts from letters to Miss Cowing show the spirit in which the men of the Queen's Own Rifles responded to the call and incidentally throw light upon the extent to which the feeling of alarm prevailed through the country. The letter is dated from Toronto University, Feb. 21, 1866.

"We were all called in by Croft and Cherriman the other day and told that he, Croft, had received a telegram from headquarters asking him to have all his men ready to be called out at a moment's notice, the Government having received definite information that the Fenians were going to make a raid. The place of attack was not known ; it was suspected, however, to be one of the cities, the main object of the raid being to obtain funds. The banks, consequently, were to be specially guarded. The guards throughout the city were doubled and all held in readiness. We of the University Corps took our rifles and greatcoats home with us and ten rounds of ammunition, after a place of rendezvous was named. I sincerely hope that these deluded men will not engage in so foolish an undertaking as the invasion of the British Provinces since they must expect nothing else than to be shot down or hanged. But fanaticism may do mischief and it is to prevent anything of the evil results that arise from such that these precautionary measures are adopted. If all things are in readiness they cannot do nearly the amount of damage that might otherwise be effected. Of course, incendiarism and everything of that kind has to be guarded against. The banks have lights burning through the whole night, men guarding the front and rear, and so forth and so forth."

The incident of the Fenian raid is well known to all students of Canadian history. It was planned in folly, carried on in a spirit of bravado and ended in ruin to those who were responsible for it. Robertson, with his fellow members of the University Corps, took part in the unfortunate skirmish at Ridgeway. A comrade in arms writes as follows:

"In May, 1866, the call came to the Canadian Volunteer Militia to put into practice on the field of strife what they had been acquiring so steadily during the past years. With the Thirteenth from Hamilton, the Queen's Own Rifles appeared on that bright, beautiful day in June, 1866, at Ridgeway. No regiment could more gallantly go into action than did the Queen's Own Rifles that morning. Our company, Number Nine, was ordered to the right, and after marching through a couple of fields along the edge of a wood, we turned eastward through the fields to meet the invaders, under whose fire we had been since leaving the wood, though by order no reply was made by us.

"We advanced in the wide-open, skirmishing order;

Dr. Robertson, Member of the Queen's Own Rifles, Toronto University

our left file was McKenzie and Robertson, and I, rear rank, stood next to Robertson. In our advance we took advantage of fences, stumps, stones, and so forth. When we had covered about two-thirds of the distance between the edge of the wood referred to above and the wood in which the Fenians were, beside a fence the gallant McKenzie yielded up his life for his native country. So did young Tempest to our left and Milburn to our rear. Thus out of the twenty-seven men of the University Corps who were at Ridgeway that morning, three were killed and five wounded.

"The following day, Sunday, a dull misty morning, we set out again from Port Colborne and marched to Fort Erie under the command of Captain Akers. Arrived at Fort Erie quite late in the afternoon, we pitched our tents on the heights overlooking the Niagara River, and not having had any food since we left Port Colborne, we were all ready to plead necessity for any requisition we might make upon the resources of the farmers of the neighbourhood for food or fuel.

"Robertson and I were in the same tent, and being both well accustomed to farm life, in the dusk of the evening we paid a short visit to the good people near at hand, returning soon, one with rails to cook the simple but tasty spoil of chicken, etc., secured by the other.

"During all this brief but eventful campaign, Private Robertson was strenuously attentive to all the duties of a soldier of the Queen in time of war. He and I have been most intimate friends ever since."

A letter from Robertson, dated Stratford, June 6th, throws the light from another point of view upon the affair at Ridgeway:

"I am, as you see, a soldier after all, and have endured, to some extent at least, the dangers of a soldier's life. I scarcely ever expected to see a battle, much less take part in one, although I have been called upon to do both now. It will be an occasion which I shall ever remember, and that for more reasons than one. I passed through all safe, however, and now how thankful I should be; amidst dangers I was protected and by God's providence I am yet in the enjoyment of good health and buoyant spirits.

"I see by your letter that you did not get any tidings at all of the battle when you wrote. I suppose when you were in Woodstock I was in the middle of the fight, thinking only of seeing foes and dispatching them. When I went away from home even, little did I think of the danger. It is really good that we have no knowledge of the future. If we had, what gloomy thoughts, continual fears, what a depression of spirit! When I think of my poor comrade McKenzie, my heart is turned at once. Just before we reached Port Colborne he spoke to me and said, 'Well, who would ever have thought that we two should be sitting in a car grasping each a rifle, to go to meet an enemy.' I feel sure that he had a kind of foreboding that he should never come back safe. I tried to cheer him up by telling him to banish gloomy thoughts from his mind. When fighting, he seemed to have the same fear and foreboding. But alas! poor fellow, he is gone. B—— came up with the body and he was buried in Woodstock with military honours. There never was such a funeral in Woodstock. All the stores were closed and flags at half-mast. All seemed to do him honour. A telegram sent up at my request reached there in time to be read at the grave. I am really sorry that I did not know at the time that it was he who was shot, but I was in such a position that I could not see who it was.

"They told me of the great turn-out in Toronto on the arrival of the dead and wounded. Stores were closed and all honour paid them. The people of Toronto sent the Queen's Own a great lot of stuff to Fort Erie and we enjoyed it well, I can assure you. Tardy honour is now being done our brave little company. Everybody is speaking of the way in which they acquitted themselves. I cannot regret too much that we were not supported, for then things might have been different from what they are, but it cannot be helped now. The artillery came up last night and we are ready for any place to which we may be called. The rest of our boys are coming up from Toronto. Our company is pretty strong, growing fast and in good spirits. We have no cowards with us."

The raid was soon over, the men disbanded and dispersed to their homes. A few graves and a quickened spirit of loyalty were the general results of the short campaign. The country learned that it could rely in case of need upon its young men, and upon none more surely than upon the students in her colleges.

The year of the Fenian raid saw the close of Robertson's university course. He left college without winning distinction in the way of medals or prizes, but thoroughly well-grounded in arts and with his mind well disciplined, especially in dialectics, in which he took peculiar delight.

VI

AT PRINCETON

THE work being done in Knox College at this period was not up to that high standard demanded by the ministry of the Presbyterian Church, and there was, consequently, considerable dissatisfaction among the students attending. Hence, when the College opened in the autumn of 1866, a large number of Canadian students found their way to Princeton, which, under the Hodges, was then attracting men from both continents. Among the Canadian students was James Robertson, who, though an ardent lover of his country and of her institutions, was determined that nothing that he could prevent should stand between him and a thorough equipment for the life-work he had chosen. He had striven towards this goal too long and at too great sacrifice to be checked now in any degree, so turning his back upon the college which naturally should have been his alma mater, he entered the seminary at Princeton as a student in theology for the session 1866–67.

It was not long before there arose among the Canadian students at Princeton heart-searchings as to their duty to their own Church and their own country, when their days of preparation were done. The following letter shows Robertson's mind on two questions to which in after life he was forced to give very careful consideration; the questions, namely, of the relative claims of Canada and the United States upon Canadian students and the question of the manning of our colleges. It is written from Princeton Seminary under date of the 12th of Jan., 1867.

"I have heard nothing from Mr. G—— nor from Mr. MacC——. Mr. D—— tells me that Paris Presbytery took up and discussed the matter of so many students coming over here. There was no definite action taken upon the subject. It would be a good thing if it would rouse men to think of what is needed to be done for Knox College. D—— says there are only thirty men attending Knox this year. If the college is to serve the purposes of the Canadian Presbyterian Church, it must be overturned and laid on better principles." The young man is somewhat radical in his remedies, but without a doubt both colleges and churches have severely suffered from lack of courage to apply just such remedies. "I hope they may start a college at Montreal and get some men from Britain. Should Canadians come over here, the inducements to stay are such that many will be persuaded to do so. Should a person go out into the field here, there are plenty of opportunities to get places and the chances are much better than in Canada. Men who have nothing to do with politics, who merely look to do good, will not think much about being under a different flag. The acquaintances formed would soon lead them to forget old prejudices and live contented here. I see the effects already on our own men. If such is the case with men who are here but one year, what will be the result with men who may take three, and who may enter relations that make it an inducement to stay? Moreover, when a person gives himself to the work of the ministry, he should not arbitrarily decide where he is to go. He is to do his Master's work, and that wherever he is called to do it. He must not scruple to live under a flag different from that under which he was born if God in His providence so directs." With which liberal spirit we would heartily agree, but it is interesting to observe how in later years when looking at the subject from another point of view, Mr. Robertson saw reason to modify his opinion very considerably. Meantime, in a man of his strong national prejudices and deep patriotic feeling, these sentiments do him no dishonour. "And by coming here," he proceeds, "and being brought into contact with the work and seeing an evident need of his services, and being in a true sense of the word 'called,' is he to refuse merely because he happens to be in the United States? Should such be the spirit of Christians, no heathen need look for a ray of light from a Christian country." The logic of this can hardly be considered faultless, but he goes on: "Is not the principle involved in this the very one that is chief among the reasons for having a Presbyterian college in Montreal? There is the same clashing of claims between East and West in Canada, only here, instead of the claims being those of rival provinces, they are those of rival countries. These boundary lines, however, are political and not spiritual. They divide the kingdoms of this world and not that of Christ. His kingdom extends to all. No man can justify himself in making a resolution to go to a place to study and refuse to stay whatever circumstances may arise. He would then be making a distinction where his Master had made none."

From the graver subject of this letter he turns with that love of humour that afterwards marked him so strongly, to retail two stories brought in by one of his fellow students.

"One of the students was attending a negro prayer-meeting. The leader was offering up prayer and in so doing offered special petitions for the children, praying that they might be 'filled with all manner of concupiscence.' Another leader, in praying for a young lady who was lying ill, petitioned 'That she might be restored again and permitted to go about like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour.' "

Let us hope that mercifully the petitions were not granted.

College life at the seminary in Princeton, at least with the Canadian contingent there, was an earnest business. These men had left their homes under pressure of high purpose and at no small cost. They were called upon to incur no inconsiderable financial outlay, to sacrifice personal and family ties as well as national sentiment. Hence they were determined to make the most of the privileges which Princeton had to offer them. The following extract gives us a glimpse into the workshop where they were being hammered and fashioned into preachers of the Gospel.

"Our class preaching commenced Tuesday. I got a sermon in to-day for criticism. I am afraid I must be severe on the man and I am sorry, for he is a good fellow. I must, however, in justice to him and to myself, tell him what I think of it. We get two sermons every week, half an hour long, with a written criticism of fifteen minutes on each. The exercise is good for the mind." Good for the mind it is without a doubt, and would there were more of this same wholesome exercise in the making of our preachers to-day!

"I have just come in from hearing two of our Canadian preachers, Messrs C—— and F——. They did very well indeed. The American students thought a good deal of them too. I heard one of them say that he never heard anything in the seminary to beat it. I feel very sensitive for the honour of Canadians here. I only now realize that, in sentiment at least, I am a Canadian." A Canadian! That he is, and ever growing into a better. His twelve years of Canada have made this young Scot no less a Scotchman, but they have tinged his blood with a strong Canadian strain. We shall come across this feeling for Canada's honour once and again during his life.

In another letter he writes: "Thursday night came, and though an excitable character, I seemed to grow more cool and collected as the time drew near for me to preach. There were four of us to preach ten-minute sermons. I came third. The *modus operandi* is as follows. One gets up and preaches; the professor then criticises him on his manner and matter. Of course, everything is taken notice of, a word mispronounced, a gesture inappropriate or awkward, a proposition not correctly expressed, anything, in short, that is not just as it should be is corrected. Now a man is criticised for bad pronunciation, then for want of proper enunciation, now for speaking too loud, then for having a nasal twang. It is rather difficult to steer clear of all the shoals. I got no criticism, only that the whole was very clearly stated and tersely expressed, and that the line of argument was clear throughout. I was rather excited at first, but soon grew confident. I took my manuscript with me, but did not need it while I was speaking. Every eye was fixed on me and not a move was made." That is easy enough to believe. We have seen something of this fixed and motionless attention, and we are prepared to believe it true even of that most critical of all critical audiences, and in those crude days. "After the whole was over, the Canadian students and some of the Americans came in to 'congratulate' us, as they term it. There seems to be a spirit of good-will among all the students towards us, but the Canadians have a decided preference for each other, and when one of the number preaches, all are sure to be there and feel as if the name and honour of the country were at stake." And no unworthy sentiment this, for these young exiles to cherish, and not without its effect upon themselves and their after-career.

"It appears the preaching last night was more than usually attractive, and there is a good deal of comment on it to-day. One of the students of the second year was in seeing me. He told me that if I sermonized like that to any congregation they would not appreciate it at all, but he said they were all interested in it at once from the novelty of the method and the compactness of style." A method and a style most surely, whose novelty and compactness by no means diminished with the passing years, as many congregations, both East and West, can attest. "Those who spoke with me did remarkably well. I could judge of their work, of course, but can say nothing of my own. Junior though the year is, and few in number, we have the name of having more real talent than any other year, by admission of the students of the other years themselves." No great need here for the Scotchman's prayer, "Oh, Lord, gie us a good conceit of ourselves." The pride of class, however, and the joy of the dawning consciousness of strength may well be pardoned. All loyal-hearted, strong men have it, but with consistent modesty as here. Moreover, we are not to forget that this outpouring of the soul is not for all, but for the one true and loving heart with whom he shares all his secret thoughts and emotions.

Outside the class room this same eager spirit prevails. At table and in their walks, those young men are keen to exercise their intellectual muscles, more especially those governing their dialectic powers. Nor do they shrink from high themes, themes political, themes theological, themes ethical, heaven and earth furnishing them, but all worthy and befitting the thing they would become. For instance: "The other Canadians here and myself had rather a keen discussion for about a week. I found myself against the whole of them and had to oppose them in detail and in conjunction." And we can, without much exercise of imagination, feel something of the stern joy with which he stepped into the fray. "I was, however, in the right as I thought,"—most assuredly !—"and succeeded at least in shutting them up if not in convincing them. In fact, I got the champion of the band to contradict the principles laid down by himself, and to crown all, yesterday afternoon, Dr. Hodge and Dr. Moffat at conference took my view of the same subject and argued my opinions as correct. The question was whether emulation or the desire of superiority was wrong *per se*, I saying it was not, they saying it was. They all got their opinions from Professor Young, who was in Knox College, Toronto." Which, knowing somewhat of that prince of dialecticians, we may take leave respectfully to doubt. "And they stick to them as fast as they can. I really deplore the case of men who in this way get to pin their belief to what a man teaches even when they cannot maintain their ground for themselves." The young man himself appears to be reasonably secure from this danger. "If I can break the spell that seems to hang over the minds of some of these men in this respect, I will do a good deal. The mind of a man should be left free in the search after truth, and not confined by trammels which only serve to warp it and dwarf its otherwise noble powers." Not even to Prof. George Paxton Young will our young dialectician surrender the free independence of his mind. Not he, though to few in his day might he so reasonably surrender as to that same Professor Young.

Again the theme is heaven. "In my last I told you of a discussion I had with one of the students and the result of it. Before I had that one off, another arose between that same man and another. I took part in the affair." An "affair" of this sort was ever a delight to his soul. "The subject was the nature of heaven and from that the nature of our bodies after the resurrection. One of the students looked upon heaven as a state and denied the reality of the material body after the resurrection. I took the opposite view, and so we contended. The whole number of the Canadians got into the affair, taking different sides. It was the subject at meals and during any spare time." Truly these college men took themselves and their work seriously.

Next time the opponent happens to be a down-easterner, and being a senior and a Yankee as well, he may fairly be supposed to be an adept in the art of debate. He is unfortunate, however, in the subject.

"We are going to the Sunday-school here as usual. One of the teachers who goes out is from the New England States. He is a fine man. We generally discuss something on our way back. In going, Mr. C——, the superintendent of the school, is with us, as we room in the same building. He with the other two, are a year in advance of me. We were discussing the Shorter Catechism questions for two Sabbaths now." Beware! our Highlander is on his native heath here. We can see him advance with joyous step upon his foe. "We came to disagree on the second one, and I was obliged to indoctrinate Mr. C——." We should expect nothing less, the benighted New Englander not having been privileged with the teaching of the parish school at Dull, not to speak of catechisings at the relentless hands of the minister of the parish; and we doubt not that he indoctrinated Mr. C—— not without a fine pity for the latter's unhappy state and a fine Highland, modest pride in his own blood and breeding, as witness: "I find that a Yankee does not know everything, and that most of them cannot argue even with a Scotchman."

Living as they do under an alien flag, these young men are intensely interested in the doings in Canada, and there are great doings there at this time. The question of temperance is appearing in the political world and the advocates of total abstinence and prohibition are proposing legislation thereupon. A long campaign is before them. Longer, indeed, than their most prescient leader can forecast, and they have need of all their courage, for against them as yet are arrayed a distinguished band of economists and theologians, not to speak of place-hunting politicians and drouthy electors. But they may well fight on. The stars in their courses are with them.

But overshadowing all other Canadian questions is that of Confederation. The loosely-tied bundle of Provinces are about to be welded into one solid State. And on these matters our young dialectic student has opinions, nor is he chary of setting them forth. These are interesting enough to us to-day, viewed in the light of history. We look in upon them at the breakfast table one morning and listen to their talk.

"It is Monday morning. I rise, split up some old shingles, fix them in the stove, place some small wood on top, and by applying a match, have the whole blazing in a short time. While the fire is getting a-going, I wash and dress. Pat gets up and does the same. Then I sit down to read Taylor's 'Manual of History.' Breakfast is announced in due time. We all assemble. Mr. Sinclair acts as general distributor of provisions, assisted on the left by Pat. Mr. McKay acts as mother for us all, carefully pouring out the coffee and supplying the requisite quantity of cream (?) and sugar, while your humble servant acts as chaplain. We sup our porridge, and then partake of our coffee and toast." Frugal fare, but luxurious in comparison with that of other men from Dull who, carrying on their back a bag of meal, bore that which was to be their main support in the ascent of Parnassus and other hills of intellectual difficulty. "For the first few minutes nothing is said, but after a little Pat inquires:

"'Is there anything new in the *Globe* this morning?'

"'Yes,' says McKay, 'it contains an account of the dinner given by John A. Cartier was there. Cameron was in the chair and they had a jolly time of it. These are the really great men of Canada, and not one of them said a word about Brown. They can get along without him. It is the names of John A. and Cartier which will be remembered in the history of our country and not that of Brown.'"

Canadians of to-day will be slow to accept that judgment as final, but Mr. McKay must be allowed his say.

"'They spoke also of reciprocity, but very little. They have just fooled Brown out. They have returned from Washington. There is no treaty, and so Brown might as well have kept in the Cabinet.'

"'Yes,' says Robertson, 'but if Brown had remained in the Cabinet he would have been responsible for this abominable conduct.'

"'What conduct?' inquires McKay hotly.

"'The conduct of offering the terms they did to the Americans,' says Robertson.

"'What terms, man?'

"'The terms of Derby's recommendation.'

"'What's the matter with the recommendations?' says McKay.

"'The matter with them! Why the whole press of Canada, except the *Free Press*, condemned the terms.'

"'But how do you know these terms were offered?'

"'The American papers say so,' replies Robertson, 'and Galt's friends do not deny it.'

"'That's so,' chimes in Pat, 'every one knows that Brown has been the means of preventing the too humiliating terms, which the Government would have given, from being offered. He has been far more useful out of the Government than in it.'" Which all will acknowledge at this day an unquestionable fact.

"'But,' persists Mac, 'he had no influence in the Government, and that is why he left it.'

"'He has done far better then,' replies Pat, 'to leave it, if he could do more out than in.'

"'Oh, pshaw!' says Mac impatiently, 'these men could have done with Brown just as they liked.'

"'That they could not,' says Robertson, 'or else they would have kept him in the Cabinet and saved the howl that was raised against them.'

"'Well, he has not the ability that these men have, at any rate,' says McKay.

"'Why not? He has gained influence and is steadily gaining influence still. He has won over the majority of the Upper Canadians and has more weight in Canada West than any other man now.'

"'Why then,' retorts McKay, 'why then does John A. carry on the Government?'

"'Any one can see that,' replies Robertson, 'because he sides in with the Lower Canadians.'"

And that is not far from the mark. We have, even in our day, known somewhat of that astuteness of the practical politician that knows how to utilize inharmonious elements in the national life and make them all serve in turn.

"'It is a manifest fact that John A. has been losing influence in Upper Canada for the last fifteen years and it was through Brown that his Government was brought to a standstill.'

"'Then how is it that John A. has brought on this Confederation?'

Dr. Robertson
Student at Princeton University

"'John A.! Not a bit of it. It is due to Brown's steady influence, for never would John A. and Cartier have consented to anything of the kind till Brown brought them to a dead stand. Brown is the man, after all, we have to thank.'"

So it would appear that Brown, the object of much obloquy in that day and afterwards, had even then not a few to do him honour, and more will join that company as Canadians come to understand their history.

"'That's so!' cries Sinclair. 'Everybody knows that's true, and so does Mac, but he won't acknowledge it. He's going to be a lawyer himself and he wants to fish a little for office. I fear he will be as venal as the rest of his brethren.'

"'That, however, would be better,' continued Sinclair, 'than trying to gain a little notoriety by opposing Dunkin's bill. Did you hear about that, Robertson?'

"'No, I did not.'

"'Well, you see this youth here had nothing better to do but try to help these poor drunkards get liquor easier and cheaper. What a generous youth he is!'

"'Surely he was not guilty of that!' exclaimed Robertson.

"'Yes, that he was.'

"'Well,' explained Mac, 'I was opposed to the bill as it stood.'

"'Oh, yes!' said Sinclair, 'you could not get all the good done your noble soul desired, and so you must do none at all.'

"'Well,' replied Mac, 'that bill would do no good anyway.'

"'How do you know? You did not give it a trial.'

"'I believe,' says Mac, 'that if liquor was cheaper and if there were none of these restrictive measures, the people would be much more sober than now.'"

An argument, by the way, not unknown even in this advanced day, but deserving of respect more for its hoary age and its marvellous tenacity of life, than for any inherent value.

"But Mac continues, 'Look at the old country! See how much they have to pay for whiskey, and yet they are more drunken than here.'

"'Prove that,' flashes Robertson. 'And even supposing that to be the case, you cannot institute a comparison between any two countries in regard to these things. The one thing you ought to do is to compare any two towns in the same country. Where a duty of thirty cents a gallon was placed on whiskey in Canada, a good deal less of it was drunk, as appeared in the reports, and since duty was put on in the States, several million fewer gallons were drunk. And besides, Mac, you are just talking nonsense, for you are saying, "Put on plenty of duty and far more will be drunk; give it to them for nothing and they will not have it." But there's the bell. We must be off. We have the old chief to-day and he will be in on the minute.'"

And so we may leave them to their serious work, and more serious play. They will bring no discredit on their country, and, please God, may serve her well ere their day is done.

VII

A CITY MISSIONARY

AT the close of his first session at Princeton, Robertson returned to Canada for the summer and took up his first mission field, supplying the stations of Thamesville, Botany, and Indian Lands. His experience at his first service was prophetic of much that was to meet him in after-years.

"I arose Sabbath morning between six and seven and got ready for my drive to Indian Lands, nine miles away. After breakfast Mr. Caven got the buggy and we set off. It had rained through the night, but was fair now. Mr. Caven drove me down about a mile and got one of his member's sons to drive me the rest of the road, as he had to preach himself at eleven. The roads were very muddy and full of water. The time was short, we had a good distance to go, and as we went through mud and water at a good rate, the usual result followed—mud flew in all directions, covering us pretty well up. Soon we came to a part of the road that was through bush. The horse could not trot for water, stumps on one side, quagmire on the other." We well remember those same swamp corduroy roads, common enough in pioneer days. "We scarcely knew which was better, to run against the one or plunge into the other. Judging that the chances lay in favour of the superior resistance of the stumps, we tried the quagmire and succeeded in all cases in getting to the other side."

This is the beginning of a habit that becomes inveterate with him. He has the saving sense of humour that prevents a too serious consideration of difficulties; and further, it little matters what may intervene, our missionary, now and afterwards, invariably gets to the other side.

"After a time we got to our journey's end. The young man returned and I went on my way amid some rain to the large log house where services were to be conducted, found a good number present, and after introducing myself, was ready to commence. The log house was divided by a partition. In one end services are carried on, in the other cooking and so forth. The preacher stood behind the table—in front and along the sides were ranged planks. From behind this table I was to hold forth."

A situation frequently reproduced, with wide variation of details, in our mud-bespattered missionary's career. But we are grateful for this initiation, for it was here that he was delivered from the bondage of his manuscript, as we learn.

"The table was so low that I could get little or no help at all from my notes which I placed upon it. I saw it would not do to attempt reading, as I would have to do it from my fist, which would not be a very graceful performance. I, therefore, concluded to extemporize, knowing well, of course, the topics and line of argument contained in my manuscript. I succeeded tolerably, as I judged from the remarks that were afterwards made."

It added not a little to their weight that these remarks fell from no less a person than Mr. Henderson himself, the sermon-taster of Indian Lands, the terror of all missionary students and fledgeling ministers. Small wonder our missionary notes with evident relief and satisfaction Mr. Henderson's opinion "that the whole was clearly and intelligently set forth." And so to the end of his preaching days will it be with him, whatever else may or may not be said, it is ever "clearly and intelligently set forth."

At the close of the second session at Princeton, Robertson was licensed to preach the Gospel, and after another summer in the mission field he betook himself to Union Theological Seminary, New York, urged to this change by a variety of reasons. In a letter he says:

"I think I am not going to return to Princeton. I have got the best of the course during these two years, and so next winter I will attend Union Seminary in New York. I can thus get acquainted with all the modes of working there and do better, I think, than by spending another winter here. The city will afford me an opportunity of hearing men that no other place will. I can also have access to libraries and so forth, such as I cannot get here, and I will have an opportunity of securing the foundation of a library at a much cheaper rate than at Princeton. Besides, I hope to catch the animus of the place and to benefit from new associations and new scenes."

So in the autumn of 1868 he took up his abode at 9 University Place, New York City, and enrolled himself as a third year student in Union Theological Seminary. Eagerly he plunges into his college work, but great as is the student instinct in him, there is another instinct in him that cannot be suppressed. He is a missionary to the heart's core. And hence we find him engaged in Sabbath-school work in the Alexander Mission down-town, in connection with Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. Dr. John Hall was pastor, and with which he had enrolled himself as a member. Before long he is given charge of the work at the mission. This mission had been carried on for a number of years but never with any great degree of success. Many students were to be found glad of the chance to increase by this work their all too scanty living, but few were possessed at once of the physical vigour and the concentrated devotion necessary to make the work truly successful. Robertson possessed both in the highest degree, and entered upon his work in the slums surrounding the Alexander Mission with that tremendous energy which distinguished his every activity.

"I am working away," he writes, "in connection with the mission. The numbers are increasing. I hope before winter is over that we can command a good attendance. The people pay good attention and are very quiet. I am visiting a good deal, but have not got yet thoroughly acquainted with the field. There is a great deal of misery among the people. Their life cannot be a happy one. How many of them live we can scarcely tell."

The terms of engagement are set forth in true American businesslike style in the following document:

"*68 Wall Street, N. Y., or 11 East Ninth Street,*
"*October 9th, 1868.*

"To Mr. James Robertson.

"My dear Sir:

"To prevent misunderstanding between us as to the terms of your engagement by the Alexander Mission which commenced October 1st, I now write as to the same.

"1st. You are engaged to preach every Sabbath evening and to conduct the weekly Tuesday evening lecture or a prayer-meeting as required; and you are to be present at the Tuesday evening meetings when required as well when the meeting may be a lecture as when it may be a prayer-meeting.

"2d. You are to be present at the teachers' meetings *when held* and assist in the consideration of the Sabbath-school lessons, and conduct the meetings if required.

"3d. You are to hold yourself in readiness to prepare with the school managers a programme for making the Tuesday evening meeting or any of the meetings interesting and profitable.

"4th. You are to visit twelve hours per week upon the families connected with the mission, and try and build up the evening meetings by including a greater attendance of adults if possible. After you become acquainted with the field, arrangements will be made as to visiting generally.

"5th. You are occasionally during each month to attend the Sabbath afternoon mission meetings and make pastoral visits, and make the acquaintance of the older scholars connected with the school.

"6th. When the sewing school shall be in session during the winter you are to look in upon the children occasionally gathered in said school.

"7th. You are to make monthly reports of the mission, directed to the treasurer, H. S. Terbell, and hand the reports either to Mr. Thomas S. Adams or to me, and in these reports you are to speak of the work generally, also of any cases of interest, number of visits made, the attendance upon your meetings and of any other matters that may occur as naturally to be reported upon.

"8th. Any cases of need or cases requiring attention are to be reported immediately.

"9th. In short, you are to hold yourself in readiness to attend to any special cases and to care for the interests of the mission generally, and to visit with any teacher desiring your aid in visiting upon members of the school.

"10th. You said you should not continue with us if you found you were not giving satisfaction.

"The only cause of dissatisfaction, I think, could be your metaphysical turn of mind. The people require plain, earnest, practical, illustrative preaching, and if you can satisfy on this point, I have no doubt of your success.

"*However*, as it is in a measure uncertain as yet how far you may succeed in adapting your preaching to the people, we have thought it best to make your engagement to continue so long as both the mission managers and yourself shall be mutually satisfied with each other, provided, however, that in any event (even if we were satisfied with each other) your term of service or engagement by the mission shall terminate with the 18th of May, 1869, unless renewed for a further term by mutual agreement.

"11th. For your services to be rendered as above you are to receive forty dollars per month, and to make out your account therefor, which, when approved by either Mr. Thos. S. Adams, or myself, will be paid by Mr. H. S. Terbell, treasurer, 39 Walker Street.

"12th. A committee of the Board of Management will from time to time meet with you to talk over the work and its needs, etc.

"Hoping your connection with the mission will be greatly blessed and will result in a church organization, I remain,

"Yours very respectfully,
"LEONARD A. BRADLEY,
"*In behalf of the Board of Managers of the Alexander Mission, King Street.*

"P. S. A written reply to the above is requested.
"L. A. B."

Forty dollars a month! In all his life he had never had such wealth at his disposal! But will any one say that with preaching and lecturing, Sabbath-school and sewing meetings and prayer-meetings, not to speak of monthly reports and "attendance upon any teacher desiring aid in visiting members of the school," each and every dollar of the forty was not fully earned?

The shrewd and businesslike managers of the Alexander Mission seemed to hold this opinion, for before three months are passed they are determined to secure the Canadian missionary for their own. A proposition is made to him of which he writes the following letter from University Place, New York, under date Jan. 13, 1869:

"Since I came back a proposition has been made to me about the mission, namely, as to whether I would be willing to stay on here permanently. There are no preliminaries arranged at all about the matter, but granted that an adequate salary, say fifteen hundred dollars to start with, would be given, should I consent to stay? They say they have been for years looking for a man for the work. They once found one, but he proved too weak physically. They say I am just such a one as they have wished for. I have the bodily strength and the mental vigour necessary. Will I accept? They told me to think of the matter till spring and that then I would be able to tell them what I thought of it."

And for the following weeks this business was the occasion of many an anxious thought and the theme of many a letter to her who was concerned in its issue equally with himself. He is very frank with her and does not shrink from discussing the matter from a domestic point of view.

"If I stay here even a year I am afraid my connection with Canada will be gone, and yet I don't know that I ought to run away from the work. One thing is certain, I would not like to commence housekeeping in New York, nor especially would I like to raise a family here. That may be looking too far ahead, but I think I must look further than next year."

And would to heaven all prospective fathers had the grace and sense to look ahead more than a year! But he is a Scot and the shrewd Scotch thrifty head on him takes note of another aspect.

"Should I stay here merely for one year unmarried, it would be better for me financially than anything I could do in Canada, for I should be some six or seven hundred dollars in pocket a year from next spring, with which to start housekeeping. I have no opinion on the subject as yet; I am merely looking at a few items."

Canny man! It is a matter of life-issues, yes, and of eternal issues, and there is much thought and prayer a-needing before it be finally settled. He must think for more than himself, too, and so he writes as in every letter for advice.

"What advice can you give me on the subject? This is a matter which touches yourself and how am I to act in reference to it? Would you be willing to wait if I should stay here for a year on trial and then go back to Canada?"

Wait! Ay, that she would, but she has waited ten years and he can hardly bring himself to feel that it is right to make her wait longer, and so on through the following weeks he discusses with himself and her. Meantime the work grows under his hand. The poor people come to love and trust him. The school and other departments flourish beyond all expectation. The attendance at all the services is greater than ever before. He begins to feel the pull of the work upon him and the question thrusts itself in upon his conscience, Ought he to abandon his work for any cause? The managers and the people earnestly press him. Dr. Hall adds his solicitations. At length he determines to bring the matter to a clear understanding. His strong, clear sense demands definiteness in the proposition before he can accept or reject. He has a consultation with the managers, the result of which he thus records:

"I met the managers of the Alexander Mission last evening and discussed the whole question. They were ready to grant everything I wanted. The points that were discussed may be reduced to four.

"(1) *Organization.* They have had preaching for the last fifteen years but never organization. Hence those who have been converted through the instrumentality of the mission have been obliged to connect themselves with other churches. This has all along been a hindrance. When the question of organization was proposed they would not hear of it. They were for the work continuing as in previous years. I refused at once to consider the subject at all without this first condition. After discussion they decided that they would organize as soon as I chose.

"(2) *Church building.* The place in which we worship now is merely a place fitted up by knocking two double houses into one. I wanted them to build or buy a church, and give us a good place to meet in as soon as possible.

This they promised to do as soon as the work would grow a little.

"(3) *Am I the man for the place?* I questioned my fitness for the work. This they all set aside. Dr. Hall was consulted and he said, 'Keep him if you can.' The managers themselves heard me preach and their opinion was that I was decidedly the best they had had in fifteen years; the teachers, the people, and all of them were unanimous in wishing me to stay. I scarcely knew what to do, so the matter rests there at present.

"(4) *Salary.* The church promised twelve hundred dollars, but I was told that if I was not satisfied the managers would add more to it. I told them I could say nothing till I had looked about me to see the price of living and so forth. I was given time."

As we read over these four points of his, these words ring in our ears with a strange familiarity, "Organization, Visibility, Fitness, Finance." How often do these key words ring from him in after-years! He meets his managers again and gives them his final decision. He cannot stay with them. To this decision he is brought, not by personal interests nor by family considerations alone, influential as these may be. It is his country that calls him. The unmanned fields of Canada, the little backwoods settlements demand labourers. True, the congregations are small. They are poor. Growth will be slow. The sphere will always be limited, offering small scope for his powers, of which he is beginning to be clearly conscious, but it is his own country, the country of his kindred, and its claims cannot be unheeded.

Before he leaves New York, he is approached by another congregation and offered a large salary to remain. Ambition appeals to him. His fellow students all advise him to stay. His friend Remick writes him, "Stay, Robertson, and you will become the pastor of a large church in New York. You have the ability and you only need it brought out by circumstances." Dr. Hall urges him not to leave New York. He would be sure to rise much quicker there than he could possibly in Canada or elsewhere. The following letter lets us into his mind :

"I got a letter to-day from Mr. Mac——. He urges a great need of men in Canada, the number of stations without supplies, the number of congregations without pastors. In this respect he is of your opinion, although perhaps on different grounds. You will not decide in favour of any particular place. You will not even allow yourself to think of a place as yet, but all unconsciously you were applying your argument more powerfully than he. You were willing to go with me in my choice, yet you wished to be near your parents, and you were sure they would not move away with you. Your parents would think it very hard if you went away from home to some different country, as would, no doubt, be the case with my father. If I could see my way clear otherwise, I do not think that would hinder me, nor do I think it would you, however difficult for a time."

The future years of separation and of mutual denial of self, each for the other and both for their common Master, offer a striking and pathetic commentary upon this faith of his in her he had chosen for companion. For, during all the long years that followed, so large a proportion of which they spent apart from each other, she never grudged him to his work, though often the denial of love was bitter enough and the weight of responsibility and care almost more than could be borne. But from the first, they were clear about this matter of mutual sacrifice, so he continues :

"We are no longer our own in that respect now. The time for self is gone with us. When we entered this sphere it was with the understanding that we were ready to do the Master's work wherever He wished. If true to Him, this we must still do or else bear the consequences of going at our own charges. It would be a fearful thing to think of in our future course, that we had regarded self and selfish considerations and not our Master's work. If His work did not prosper, we could scarcely ever forgive ourselves. But I acknowledge to you that it is not an easy matter for me to decide what to do."

But he had seen his way and it lay towards Canada, and once having seen it, nothing could turn him from it. In a short time he is settled in a small charge at a quarter of the salary offered by the big New York congregation. "The time for self is done." That was the key-note of his life then and after, as all men can testify who knew him well. His long and arduous struggle with severe poverty and untoward circumstances was at an end. By dint of unremitting industry, strong resolve, unswerving adherence to his purpose, he has arrived at the goal he had set before him years before.

VIII

WIFE AND MANSE

HAVING decided for Canada, Robertson was relieved of further anxiety as to a sphere of labour. For in Western Ontario there were not a few fields, such as they were, standing vacant. There remained, however, another matter of the first importance demanding due and earnest consideration, and that was his marriage.

The following letter is so unusual with him in its self-revelation, so full of tender affection, that it does much to quell in us anything of impatience with the determined, almost imperious self-confidence, of this young man who has a way of making things move out of the path before him. Hence we give it in full, with the address and date, No. 9 University Place, New York, February 3, 1869.

"Just twelve years ago to-day I left home to endeavour to do something for myself. How brief the time appears, and yet what changes since! Little did I think at that time that I should be spending the twelfth anniversary of that day in New York City in the last year of my theological course. Less still, that I should be writing a letter to Miss Cowing! Well I know and feel that I have not had the shaping of my own life. Goodness and mercy have followed me, and now I ought to raise my stone of remembrance to Him who is the Author of all my blessings. When I left home then, I was a green lad without any experience of the world ——"

That is true enough; no need to tell us that, James, with your "high-water trousers," your unspeakable hats and your clothes so fearfully and wonderfully made, the result of the untutored genius of the travelling tailor. Not but what you had earned money enough to buy you finer, but your brothers and your father were in need of it, both then and in the hard college years afterwards. But green though he was, he had his deep thoughts and his lofty aims, as witness:

"I had some aspirations higher than those of a school-teacher, but how they were to be realized was more than I knew. The first two years of my course were rather dreary, nothing having been realized. I was too recently from home to effect much. It was when I went to Innerkip that I became fixed in opinions and began to draw out the faint outlines of my future course. Ten years appeared long to look ahead. When once my resolve was taken, however, I was committed to it and my only aim was to attain my goal."

That characteristic of his that came to stand out so clearly seems to have been early bred in his bones. Once committed to a resolve, there is no more shilly-shallying for him, but straight at it he goes. Now he turns to her, who through these years has had the harder part, and speaks thus tenderly:

"With the whole of these ten years you are familiar. You have known all. I had neither ability nor inclination to conceal anything from you. My troubles you have shared and lightened. My joys you have doubled. Your sympathy has ever cheered me in gloomy hours, and the thought of you has often served as a guardian angel in the hour of temptation.

"These ten years have not been without their trials, light though they may seem to me now, but if they have given me more of a spirit of self-reliance, if they have made me more practical, if they have acted as a fire to purge away considerable dross, I am content. These difficulties, however, have never made any difference between us. We have been together and separated, but I hope we have only learned to love each other the more. Had our circumstances been different we might not have had so much real pleasure, and although I am buoyant enough in spirit to hope that greater pleasure is in store for us, yet I must say that if the future has in its bosom an amount equal to that of the past I shall not quarrel with it. The future is, of course, to be to me a time of trial; it is to be a time of activity as well, if my life is spared, and as in all the past I have had your sympathy and support, I expect it still in the future, only more so, inasmuch as you will be equally interested in the work with me. In the past I have worked alone to a great extent. In the future I hope to be in partnership where I shall have a right to expect counsel and advice."

And nothing in the man during this period of his life stands out more honourably than this, his watchful care that there should come no gulf between the student with developing powers and ever-widening views and growing ambitions, and the simple, bright-eyed country lass who had, in spite of herself, given him her heart's love years ago. What pains he takes that she shall know all about him, not only the more external happenings, but the inner movements of his life as well. With her he shares his thoughts, his changing opinions, his aims, his plans. He guides her reading, stimulates her intellect by suggesting topics of study, so that when he comes to claim her he finds her fit for companionship and ready to share in his life-work.

On the 23d of September, 1869, they were married. Never had man a wife more loyal, more faithful, more steadfast under burdens, more ready to offer herself in sacrifice upon the altar of her own or her husband's service. For thirty-three years she stood beside him, sharing with equal readiness his sorrow and joy, thus joining with him in his great ministry, in her place and according to her ability, without faltering and without complaining till the very close, assuming after a few brief years the whole care of family and home that he might be carefree for his wider work. Something of what Canada owes to her husband, many Canadians will ever gratefully acknowledge, but what Canada owes to this silent, faithful, courageous woman, no one will ever know.

A few weeks after their marriage, on the 18th of November, 1869, Mr. Robertson was ordained and inducted into the pastoral charge of Norwich, a small village in the southeast of Oxford County, in the Province of Ontario, where they settled down in the cozy little manse to a few years of busy, happy life. Writing of this period Mrs. Robertson says:

"We set up our first housekeeping at Norwich in the manse, a pretty white cottage in a garden. We had plenty of work and we had pleasures too. The people were exceedingly kind and the years passed quickly. Three of our five children were born during these years, Tina with her charms and winning ways, the pride and pet of the congregation, then Willie and Jamsie, sturdy little fellows, fond of their own way."

We should expect just that of Willie and Jamsie, remembering that they were children, and knowing something of the father they had.

There was nothing to distinguish this congregation from scores of others in Western Ontario. There were two out-stations, Southeast Oxford and Windham, attached to Norwich, and these three constituted a charge somewhat widely scattered, involving long drives and very considerable exposure. The congregation was made up for the most part of small farmers who, though in much easier circumstances, retained in their ways of thinking and living much of the primitive simplicity of the early pioneer days. But though the congregation was ordinary, their young minister was by no means so. His very first sermon, such was its extraordinary force and vigour, took the people by storm, and during his stay with them he never failed to grip his people with his preaching. He was frequently asked to exchange pulpits with neighbouring ministers. One day after hearing him preach, the minister of a neighbouring town, himself one of Canada's most distinguished preachers of that day, exclaimed :

"There's a man who will one day be great, likely a professor in one of our colleges."

He was a tremendous worker. He planned large things and such were his great physical powers that he could carry through his plans to completion. Difficulties could not daunt him. An incident is related by his wife :

"Having three regular stations and really four others, there was much visiting to be done and much driving. We provided ourselves with a horse and named him 'Derby.' He was a fine animal and did us good service. He was well fed and well treated, but he must not let the grass grow under his feet if his master was behind him. If the driver lost his way, for then he was fond of exploration as in after years, he need only to loosen the reins and Derby would bring him safely home, whatever the state of the roads or however dark the night. On one occasion only, if I remember rightly, did he refuse to do his master's bidding. It was the time of the spring freshets. The pastor was to speak at an important meeting some eight miles distant. Other speakers were to be there too. He got about half-way when the road was blocked by

Dr. Robertson
Minister at Norwich

running water, ice and logs. Derby positively refused to go through. Turning to the nearest farmhouse he left there his wife and horse, but he went to the meeting. Taking off his boots and stockings, he rolled up his trousers, waded through the stream and reached the place in time to make his speech, the speech of the evening it turned out, none of the other speakers being able to get there. He afterwards said that he found little inconvenience in the crossing, except that his bare feet occasionally stuck to the ice."

"On another occasion," writes a parishioner of his, "our minister was to dispense communion in his East Oxford charge, and a brother minister from Woodstock was to preach for him in Norwich and Windham, or Bookton, as it came to be called. By some misunderstanding, the Woodstock man came on the Sabbath morning to East Oxford instead of to Norwich. Mr. Robertson had driven out from Norwich, a distance of some nine miles, and scarcely got his horse unhitched when, to his astonishment, the Woodstock man drove up. Mr. Robertson immediately hitched up his own horse again, and rushing his Woodstock friend into the buggy, gave him the whip and reins and said,

"'Drive on, and be sure you don't spare the horse. He'll carry you through.'

"And as the minister drove down the road at a furious pace, Mr. Robertson continued to call after him, 'Don't spare the horse, he'll carry you through.'"

Mr. Robertson was more than a mere minister to his congregation. He was a man with the best of them. It is related how on a Sabbath evening after he had begun his service, the fire-bell rang. At once Mr. Robertson dismissed the congregation, for fire protection there was none, unless such as could be provided by the bucket brigade. It was discovered that a neighbouring hotel was on fire. Immediately the minister took command of the situation, organized the crowd, and by dint of the most strenuous exertions had the fire suppressed. In gratitude for his services, and in sympathy with his exhausted condition, the hotel keeper brought him a bottle of brandy with which to refresh himself.

"Never will I forget," writes another member of his congregation, "the manner in which he seized that brandy bottle by the neck, swung it round his head and dashed it against the brick wall, exclaiming, as he did so, 'That's a fire that can never be put out.'"

He had done more work than any two men at the fire, and was in consequence more in need of refreshment than any other, but he had a perfect hatred of drink and drinking habits.

Mr. Robertson was more than minister to his people; he was friend, counsellor, arbiter as well. They came to him not only with their spiritual difficulties, but also with their family troubles and business differences.

"Two of his congregation were in partnership for some time," writes one of his members. "They were both church workers, but when the time of the partnership expired there was some trouble in winding up their affairs. One day when Mr. Robertson was entering the office, he met one of them coming out, bade him good-morning, and receiving a very brief reply, said to the other partner, 'Mr. W—— seems to be in a hurry.'

"'Yes,' replied the partner, 'we have been trying to settle up our affairs, but we are having some trouble.'

"'I am sorry to hear that,' says Mr. Robertson, 'it will never do. If I can do anything to help you I shall only be too glad.'

"The men agreed to have Mr. Robertson act the part of arbitrator and soon both were satisfied."

The five years of their stay in Norwich were to the

Robertsons years of hard but happy toil in the congregation, and of quiet domestic joy in their home. To these years how often in the midst of loneliness and separation for them both did they look back with wistful yearning. For never were they to know again the full peace and content and joy of unbroken family life. This their cross was laid upon them, and without murmur they took it up and carried it to the end.

IX

THE ROBERTSON LAND

AT the head of the great waterway that reaches from the Atlantic westward into the heart of Canada, stands Fort William, once the point of departure for the far West and the far North by the great fur brigades in the brave days of the Hudson's Bay Company's régime. At Fort William there used to gather for annual council those fur-trading lords of forest and river whose fame has floated down to us through a hundred years. It is at this point that Western Canada proper begins, that Canada whose discovery as a field for settlement made a Dominion of Canada an assured reality and a Canadian nation a possibility. From that ancient trading post west for four hundred miles stretched a waste of rock and water, impassable at that time except by canoe brigade in summer and dog-train in winter. And a forbidding barrier that same rocky waste has proved through all these years. Beyond this rocky barrier lies the prairie country, then one vast empty, boundless plain, offering in those old days a home to the red man, the buffalo and all wild things, a stamping ground to the fur trader and in later years a precarious dwelling to the remote and infrequent settler. For a thousand miles the prairie land stretches and rolls till it brings up against the bases of the mighty Rockies.

Far away to the West, between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, lies the most Western colony in British North America, British Columbia, consisting of a series of mountain ranges and intervening valleys heavy with forests and cut deep by rapid rivers. Until recent years this Pacific coast, to most men, was the limit of Canada's territory, but the time came when far to the North, fifteen hundred miles away, a new land was found, and into the Yukon country men thronged and crushed in their struggle for gold.

Before the year 1870, when Canada took over from the Hudson's Bay Company the administration of the West, all that vast territory that lay beyond the Great Lakes and swept up the coast line to the far North, was to all but the fur trader and the adventurous explorer, a *tellus ignotum*. No living man dreamed, not even the most far-seeing of the Hudson's Bay factors who knew the country best, that the day would come when down that same Kaministiquia River, where there floated back the rythmic chant of the voyageurs who had gone swaying round the bend in their canoes, there should come the hoarse roar of three transcontinental railways. A few men of prophetic soul had a vision that in some favoured spots men might make homes in security and in comfort; but the vast majority of Canadians and, of course, all others, regarded the great West as an extremely doubtful asset to the Dominion. And the tales that came of terrible Arctic winters which few men could support and of vast barren spaces where no man could dwell, made people content to abide where they were safe, if somewhat cramped in opportunity to live.

But the year 1870 changed all this. That was the year of that very needless and very unhappy little rebellion in which men of solid sense and worth, exasperated beyond endurance by the chafing of stupid misgovernment upon their own inflamed prejudices, allowed themselves to be led by the nose by a shallow-pated Frenchman, vain and none too courageous, who, after bringing brave men into difficulty and danger, fled to safety, careless of their fate, to return at a later day to perpetrate an even more foolish, base and cowardly outrage upon those who trusted him and upon an all too lenient government. The rebellion concentrated the eyes of Canada, and to a certain extent of Great Britain, upon the West. The troops returning from the suppression of the rebellion, the officers who commanded them, the politicians and the shrewd business men who followed in their wake, all came back enthusiastic immigration agents. Then there began that succession of tidal waves of immigration which has continued to flood the Western country with men hungry for land, from that day to this.

In the far North, too, in late years, it has been found that men can dwell in comfort; that not only adventurous miners taking their lives in their hands, but men of less heroic mould, can make homes, if not fortunes, in the great valleys that lie between those mountain ranges with their eternal snows.

This vast country which, reaching from Fort William across prairies and mountains to Victoria and up along the rugged and indented coast line from Victoria to Skagway and far into Dawson City, this great West which gave the Dominion a new basis and a new hope for empire, this is the Robertson land; the Robertson land because it was the scene of his labours, the arena upon which, during twenty-five years, he made proof of his powers of administration, and, more than all, the Robertson land because it bears to-day the mark of James Robertson's hand more than that of any other one man's, and that mark is cut deep into the heart and conscience, into the very life, of the Western people. For not only was he more than any other the maker of a great Church in this land, but, as we shall see, his hand was felt in the tracing of those other structural lines that enter into the building of a nation.

X

PIONEER PRESBYTERIANS IN THE WEST

THE religious history of Western Canada reflects little glory upon Canadian Presbyterianism in the early decades of that history. Indeed, not to any Church in Canada, but to those of the motherland, is largely due the credit for the earliest efforts in evangelizing the native races of the Western half of British America, as well as for the care of the religious life of the early settlements. The great Roman Catholic missionaries were men from the home land, sent forth and supported by the various religious orders of France. The missions of the Anglican Church were to a large extent and to a comparatively late day, manned and supported almost entirely by the great missionary societies of England. Early missions conducted by the Methodist Church were carried on by men sent out by the Wesleyan body of England to the Indian races and to the white settlers. So, too, the Presbyterian Church of Canada was slow to enter in and possess the great land that lay beyond the Lakes. It is not hard to account for this indifference of the Churches in Eastern Canada to the West. These Churches were divided into factions and were absorbed in the struggle for their own existence; the settlements in the West were few, unknown, and insignificant.

Before 1870 the land, as we have seen, was practically unknown to all except the fur trader and the explorer. Along the waterways that led from Fort William to the Red River, were only the fur-trading posts with their dependent groups of natives, half-breeds and whites.

Here, but for the occasional ministrations of a Roman priest or Anglican missionary *en voyage*, there was nothing to suggest religion in any of its forms.

Far away, on the Western Pacific coast, in the few small settlements that were to be found on Vancouver Island, on the mainland coast and along the rivers, the Presbyterian Church of Canada had not a single missionary until the year 1862, when the Canada Presbyterian Church sent out the Rev. Robert Jamieson as their first missionary to British Columbia. On arriving at Victoria he was surprised to find that post occupied by the Rev. John Hall, who had been sent out the year before by the Irish Presbyterian Church. Jamieson went to New Westminster, then the capital of the province, and there for twenty-two years he rendered splendid service to the Church and the cause of religion in British Columbia. Two other men from the Canada Presbyterian Church joined him, Duff in 1864 and Aitken in 1869. It is, however, to the Church of Scotland that the chief credit is due for the early prosecution of Presbyterian missions in British Columbia. Up to the year 1887 work was carried on by that Church at some nine or ten points upon both island and mainland by such men as Nimmo, Somerville, and McGregor. Indeed, the first Presbytery of British Columbia was one formed in connection with the Church of Scotland. In 1887, that Church withdrew, handing over all its work to the Canada Presbyterian Church. But its interest in Western Canada has not ceased, as evidenced by the fact that many of the leading congregations of that body in Scotland, in 1894, responded to the appeal of the Canadian Church and undertook the support of missions of their own in British Columbia. It is interesting to note that among those so contributing was the congregation of the Rev. Mr. Somerville, who, twenty years before, was one of those early missionaries from the Church of Scotland to British Columbia.

In 1872, the Pacific Province had begun to loom somewhat more distinctly above the horizon of the Canadian Church, for at that date the mission was transferred from the Foreign to the Home Mission Committee. But the field was far away, little known and difficult of access, and the work was not pushed with any degree of vigour and enthusiasm. In the coast towns the congregations grew with the growth of population. But far up in the interior were mining and ranching communities almost entirely neglected by the Presbyterian as by the other Churches. It is not strange, therefore, that men mingling with the native races descended to the level and often below the level of those pagan people, and, forgotten by their Church, themselves forgot their fathers' religion and their fathers' God. Certain it is that many years after, their sons were discovered grown to young manhood, who had never heard, except in oaths, the name of Jesus, and knew nothing of the story of man's redemption.

As the Presbyterian Churches both in Scotland and in Eastern Canada can claim little glory in connection with the planting and nurturing of religion in the Pacific Province, so also the early religious history of the vast provinces lying between British Columbia on the west and that rocky barrier by the Great Lakes on the east, reflects little credit upon these Churches. But while these Churches failed in their duty to their co-religionists in these distant settlements, there remains in the story of that settlement of Scottish people on the banks of the Red River of the North, an example of loyal fidelity to Church and to conscience under specially trying circumstances, not often paralleled in the history of our Church.

The story of the Selkirk settlers has often been told. There are those to whom it is not a tale of unmixed heroism. But it is a tale of which no people need be ashamed. From the Highlands of Scotland they came in various detachments between the years 1812 and 1815 under the auspices of Lord Selkirk, and settled in the tract of land secured for them by purchase from the Hudson's Bay Company, that lay in the valley of the Red River, reaching southward from the fort that stood at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine. They were a very small company, in all under three hundred souls, and never at any one time many more than half that number. But they clung to the banks of the Red River, and though harried by a hostile fur-trading company and driven off once and again from their homes, they returned to their place, exhibiting, during those first terrible years of the existence of the colony, a patience and an endurance and a courage that few would fail to call heroic. But none will be found to refuse the claim to heroism to those who, through all trials and discouragements in unceasing struggle with the rigours of climate and stubbornness of soil, their lands devastated by fire and flood, their homes swept by plague, maintained their faith in God and held to their Church with a tenacity and loyalty that could not be shaken. It had been one of the conditions attached by Lord Selkirk to the founding of his colony, that with the Scotch emigrants should be sent a minister of their own Church. For a variety of reasons, some less creditable than others to those concerned with the administration of the colony's affairs, this promise of Lord Selkirk's was never kept. Again and again, in one form and then in another, petition was made to the representatives of Lord Selkirk, to the noble earl himself, to the honourable the Hudson's Bay Company, to the Church of Scotland, but without result. True, for some three years after the colony was founded, a worthy elder of the Church of Scotland with special ordination, Mr. James Sutherland, ministered to the spiritual wants of the settlers. But by the machinations of the Northwest Company, he was removed to Eastern Canada. Thus for nearly forty years these sturdy Presbyterians waited for "a minister of their own," keeping alive the holy flame of true piety by the daily sacrifice of morning and evening worship upon the family altar, the head of each family being priest in his own house.

Presbyterians of the West are not likely to forget the generous and considerate kindness with which the clergy of the Church of England of those days cared for that shepherdless flock. By the descendants of the Selkirk settlers the names of John West, William Cochrane, David Jones will long be cherished, who, with a liberality that may appear strange to rigid Anglican churchmen of to-day, but, happily, characteristic of those primitive times, not only performed for those Presbyterian people all the pastoral functions of which they stood in need, visiting their sick, baptizing, marrying, burying, but even went so far as to adopt at one of the services of the Sabbath, a form of worship more nearly akin to that so dear to Presbyterian hearts. There are not wanting of the Anglican Church to-day some who say that West and his fellow clergymen erred in their liberality and that a more unyielding policy would have resulted in the shepherding of this stubborn flock into the Anglican fold. But they who thus speak know not the love of Church and creed inwrought with the very fibre of Scottish character; and more, they forget that in those primeval days men lived nearer the simple and real things, and that to them religion was more than Church and brotherly love than forms of worship.

At length the petition of the Selkirk settlers reached the ears of the Free Church of Scotland. By that Church it was passed on to the Free Church in Canada. Thereupon the Rev. Dr. Burns, professor in Knox College, acting for the Foreign Mission Committee, laid hands upon a young man who had shown vigour and sense in mission work among the French Canadians, and thrust him forth to be the first Presbyterian missionary to Western Canada. And so one bright September Sabbath morning the forty years of faith-keeping by these Red River Presbyterians were rewarded when three hundred of them gathered to hear the Rev. John Black, from Canada, preach the first Presbyterian sermon delivered in that new land.

That was a notable gathering. The preacher was a great man, though none of them of that day knew just how great. It took thirty years of knowing to reveal that to them, and to many others. They were great men, too, who formed that congregation. They had convictions in them about their Church and the forms of their religion, and while they had gratefully availed themselves of the religious services of their Anglican neighbours, adapted as far as might be with true Christian courtesy to their taste, when John Black appeared, the iron of Calvinism in their blood forbade that there should be any falling away from the faith of their forefathers, and so with one accord and without reproach, they gathered to him to worship according to their ancient ritual.

They were well suited to each other, minister and people, and with the years they grew into each other's trust and love till a bond was formed between them that neither time nor death itself could snap. Along the banks of the Red River lay John Black's parish. They loved the river, did those lonely exiles. Every farm, therefore, must have its river front, sometimes three chains, never more than twelve in width, with its rear reaching from two to four miles back on to the prairie, and on every farm front there stood a house overlooking the Red River. Small wonder they loved that river. It was their line of communication by boat and canoe in summer, by snowshoe and skate, dog-sled and toboggan in winter, and it was at all times the bond of their social life. And thus it was that John Black's parish consisted of a double row of houses, one on either side of that street of tawny flowing water. In and out of these river homes by day and by night, through summer and through winter, faithful, loving and indefatigable, wrought the minister for ten long years alone, but for his band of godly elders and his devoted wife, Henrietta Ross.

During these ten years the settlement continued to grow, not only in numbers, but in extent as well, offshoots from the parent colony venturing the daring experiment of farming the bleak and unsheltered prairie back from the river. About the fort, too, a little village was springing up, ambitious, seditious, vicious Winnipeg, requiring constant spiritual oversight and care. Thus the work grew far beyond the strength of even this tireless missionary. But with an apathy inexplicable, the Church in the East remained unmoved, and though year by year Black kept sounding his lonely cry for helpers, he was forced to toil on at his post unaided and alone. But he never faltered, nor did he ever think of retreat. To this work and this land he had given himself, and here he would abide till the call should come which would set him free from all his weary toil and summon him to his larger service and to his reward.

XI

THE CALL OF THE WEST

THE reports of the strange wild land west of the Lakes, and of the settlements forming, kept coming back to Eastern Canada through many channels. By private letters, by traders, travellers and explorers, and by John Black's regularly recurring petitions for assistance, the Christian people of Eastern Canada began to be aware of that distant point of British North America, and to have a conscience towards it. At length, in response to his appeals for helpers, Rev. James Nisbet was sent out in 1862, and for four years this missionary assisted the heroic Black, ministering to the settlements at Kildonan, Little Britain, Fairfield, Headingly, Park's Creek, and Fort Garry.

But in addition to the burden of responsibility which he carried day by day for his people scattered thus widely through these growing communities, Black's heart went out towards the native races whose proximity made constant appeal to his conscience and to whom many of his people were bound by ties of blood. It is this yearning after the Indian peoples of the land that inspired his famous letter sent in 1864 to the Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church.

"I am not satisfied," he writes in noble complaint, "with our Church's position in regard to missions. We are doing nothing directly to spread the Gospel among those that are without. We are leaving the high places of the field to other communions; and, what is worse, there are places of the field left uncultivated and uncared for altogether because we and others are not doing our share of the work. I do not lightly esteem the work our Church is actually doing. I recognize with thankfulness the energy and zeal she is displaying. I do not forget her great work in Canada, or her missions to her own people in British Columbia and Rupert's Land. It is of vast importance to keep what we actually have, and to establish ourselves with the very earliest in the new colonies. I would not have this work cut short, but rather prosecuted more vigorously. Still, there is another branch of the Church's work in which we clearly fail. We have no heathen mission. If 'missions are the chief end of the Christian Church,' then so far, at least, we fail in our chief end. We are incomplete, we lack one essential part of the Church's equipment, we do not fully implement our great commission, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' I am not satisfied with this state of things. I feel it a check on my prayers for missions that we are not labouring for missions. I have little heart in trying to stir up a missionary feeling amongst the people when I cannot point out an appropriate channel by which that spirit may vent itself, nor can I plead freely for a liberal collection for the Foreign Mission Committee when in the usual acceptance of the term, we have no foreign missions at all.

"I cannot but think that many of you must feel on this subject much as I do. The missionary element seems to enter into the very conception of a church, but in looking at our own, we see that that element is wanting, and we feel there is something deficient. We try to persuade ourselves that our work is rather among our own people than among the heathen, and for a time, when the pressure of a special need is upon us, we make ourselves think so, but when the pressure is removed and our thoughts and Christian instincts return to their natural course, our former dissatisfaction returns, we feel that there is something wanting, something incomplete, a duty undone or not attempted to be done. Nor does it seem to mend matters much that we contribute to the missions of the other Churches. There seems to be a conscience for our own Church that nothing will satisfy but direct, earnest effort on our own part, a mission or missions of our own. It is surely time that the present state of things was changed and our Church put in her right position; that she should be put ahead of other Churches and, what is far more, abreast of her duty in doing the work of God among the heathen. I think, instead of finding such a work a burden, we should feel it a relief, that we should feel a liberty and enlargement in our minds which we do not experience. I know that many of you have been giving this matter prayerful and earnest thought, and that various plans and schemes have been proposed; but now it is surely time to take practical action. Let this be the distinction of the Synod of 1864. Let it begin the work of heathen missions, and first of all, let it acknowledge the claims of the heathen of our own country, of British North America. I for one would not have you think in the meantime of any other field. Other fields may be, indeed, more promising, but that is not the question. Providence clearly points out this field as ours, and that is all we have to look at. Nor is it so discouraging as is sometimes supposed. I know of nothing more cheering anywhere than the state of the Episcopal missions in the far North under the charge of my dear friends Mr. Kirby and Mr. McDonald. And there are points yet unoccupied where we might hope to labour, if not with equal, at least with an encouraging measure of success. Details about one of them are already in the hands of your committee.

"And do not be afraid of expense. There can be little doubt that such an effort made by their own Church, and giving them a mission of their own, would call forth, by God's blessing, a spirit of liberality among our people which would disappoint all our fears and make us glad and thankful."

Two years later, the desire of Dr. Black's heart was satisfied in the appointment of Nisbet as missionary to the Cree Indians of the plains. Nisbet established his mission at a point of the North Saskatchewan five hundred miles northwest of Fort Garry, where he founded the town of Prince Albert, which thus became the headquarters of the first Presbyterian mission to the Indians of the northwest, as also the nucleus of a rapidly growing white settlement.

After eight years of unwearied service, Nisbet and his devoted wife, a native of Kildonan, returned to the old home, spent and broken in health, both to die. They sleep in the sacred ground of the old Kildonan churchyard, but their work abides.

Meanwhile the staff of workers continued gradually to increase, till between the years 1866 and 1870 there were five ordained ministers in the field: Black, Nisbet, Matheson, Fletcher, and McNab. But far beyond the powers of these men the settlements were extending. The streams of immigration kept steadily trickling into the Red River valley, till the rising tide flowed far out upon the plains east, west and north, so that in addition to the claims of the settlements already supplied with Gospel ordinances, daily appeals came from groups of settlers strewn over the prairie at such points as High Bluff, Rockwood, Portage la Prairie, and Palestine.

The year 1870 was, undoubtedly, the *annus mirabilis* in the history of Western Canada. It was the year of the First Rebellion, the year when the change of government from that of the Hudson's Bay Company to that of the Dominion Government went into practical effect; it was the year, too, that saw the birth of the Province of Manitoba; it was the year when Canadians discovered their great West. By Presbyterians it is remembered as the year in which Manitoba came near enough to the Eastern Church to be considered a home mission rather than a foreign mission field, and the year also in which the Presbytery of Manitoba was erected.

The organization of that Presbytery, which took place on the 16th of June, 1870, was conducted with appropriate solemnities, full care being taken to have everything "done decently and in order." The official sermon was preached by the Moderator appointed by the Synod of the Canada Presbyterian Church, Rev. John Black, from the text: "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not." It was a brave text, uttered first by a brave man, and now after many centuries chosen by a brave man to set his fellows and himself at their work with sufficient faith and courage. And they had need of both courage and faith, for the responsibilities and the opportunities of that day. The sermon done, the assembled congregation of Kildonan folk remained to meet with the "fathers and brethren." There they sat, three ministers, Black, Fletcher, and McNab, the fourth, James Nisbet, being five hundred miles away at his lonely post among the Crees, and their elders, Angus Polson, John Sutherland, and Donald Gunn. There they sat to deliberate concerning the affairs of the kingdom in that land so remote and limitless and so rapidly swallowing up the incoming people for whom they must care. Their moderator had bidden them "faint not." Faint? Not they. Men wearing such names faint not easily. With assured confidence they grappled with their business and when they rose for the benediction that sent them off to their various fields, several great things had got done. They had named and set forward as pace a congregation in the capital city of the province, Knox Church, Winnipeg. They had organized a Home Mission campaign and they had planned a college. In very deed there was no "fainting" in John Black and those who sat with him in presbytery. Under their hand the work rapidly progressed.

The General Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church, of course, granted the prayer of this Presbytery's overture and duly established Manitoba College as an institution for higher learning. The site chosen for the college was Kildonan, suitable buildings having been provided by the congregation. A college meant professors. Accordingly, next year, 1871, Rev. George Bryce, M. A., came West to be the first professor in Manitoba College, to preach for the congregation of Knox Church in Winnipeg and incidentally to enter upon that career of missionary activity which he has pursued ever since with such remarkable energy and zeal. A few months later, in the following year, the Church of Scotland Synod, coöperating with the Canada Presbyterian Church in both the missionary and educational movement, sent out the Rev. Thomas Hart, M. A., as professor of Manitoba College, who, coming to the West and finding the mission work far beyond the powers of those in the field, took up in addition to his college duties his full share of missionary labour, in which varied service for thirty-five years he has toiled on with unwearied zeal and unassuming devotion.

But toil as they might, the whole force of ministers, missionaries and professors could not keep pace with the country. Along the black trails by which the freighters made their way West and North, the pioneer prairie "schooners" steadily streamed, for no matter if land in abundance and of the best lay unclaimed at the door of the settlements already formed, the far cry of the alluring West haunted the newcomers and they could not rest till they had passed beyond the limits of civilization, leaving their Church to follow if she cared or could. Day after day and week after week this stream passed on unheeded of all except those who had been bidden to watch.

It was no easy task to secure missionaries for Western Canada. The country was remote, the field was hard, distances were great, privations many, isolation trying. Occasionally a man broke down and retired to the East. Nisbet dropped at his post and ever as the Presbytery met, rumours were exchanged of settlements still beyond, unreached by the message of the Gospel. No wonder if that cry of the West, new then, now grown so old, for men and more men began to assail Eastern ears with unvarying insistence. From sheer monotony of its repetition the Church began to grow indifferent to the cry. Besides, every man was busy with his own, and the West was very far away. But in one case and that a most notable, the call found response. The young, vigorous, and ambitious congregation of Knox Church, Winnipeg, proud of its newly organized Session and its, for the second time, enlarged church, seeking a minister, approached no less a person than the Convener of the Home Mission Committee himself, Rev. William Cochrane, with a view to call. They were not encouraged to proceed. But in the Convener's Presbytery of Paris there was a young minister who, ever on the alert for the neglected and outcast, was continually stirring up his Presbytery to Home Mission effort, James Robertson, of Norwich. To him the appeal was sent to go West to preach in Knox Church for six months, to spy out the land, find out the true condition of things and report. The West had often appealed to him as a field for missionary effort. He was in need of a rest and change, and so he resolved to see this new and wonderful land, to give such help as he could for the space of time indicated and to return. It was the dead of winter and no time to go exploring that land of frosts and blizzards. Besides, it was the holiday season. But for Robertson frosts and blizzards had little terror, and times and seasons mattered not when the call of duty sounded. There was work to be done. He had undertaken to do it and the sooner he was at it the better. So he left his home, his wife and family of babies a day or two before the New Year and set his face westward.

XII

THE WESTWARD TRAIL

ON the evening of Tuesday, December 30, 1873, a young minister from the country, tall and spare of form and rugged of face, stood in the Union Station at Toronto, facing the westward trail. It was the Rev. James Robertson, of Norwich. There was none with him to bid him Godspeed, and yet a very considerable interest attached to his journey. He was going on a mission for his Church to that great wonderland of the new West. And while the vast majority of his fellow churchmen knew nothing of his purpose and, indeed, would be but slightly interested had they known, there were a few among those who had looked farthest into the future and estimated the possibilities of Western development to whom this mission was of the most profound importance.

It took him ten days to make his first trip to the West. Twenty-three years before, it had taken John Black eight weeks to make the same trip. To-day a servant of the Church going on a Western mission spends two nights and a day in the palatial comfort of a Pullman car and arrives at the metropolis of the West. Robertson's route lay by Detroit, Chicago, and St. Paul. His New Year Day he spent on the journey between the two latter cities. On the second of January he left St. Paul, got stuck in a snow-drift and so did not reach Breckenridge, the end of the railway, till Sunday afternoon, a day late. Writing his wife from Breckenridge under date of January 5th, he says:

"We got in here all right last night, without making much delay after we started from where we got fast. For those thirty-nine miles the prairie was perfectly level, with no wood in sight till we came near Breck, where we saw some along the Sioux Wood River. Breck is at the confluence of the Sioux and Otter Tail, which two afterwards flowing due north form what is called the Red River of the North. Here there are but few inhabitants, perhaps about a hundred, and very few in the neighbouring country. The Sioux forms the boundary between the state of Minnesota and Dakota territory. The river is not navigable as far as this, owing to the shallowness of the water and sandbars. Up to Moorhead boats come. I am writing in the morning, and may find out more about the place before I go away.

"When I came here last night I found that there was but one hotel in the place. There I got good food, clean and well cooked; sausage, beefsteak and roast chicken that should satisfy any person. I did justice to what I knew. I never cared to buy a pig in a 'pock,' nor did I care much about eating a pig, or something worse, in a 'pock.'"

While *en route* he had his introduction to some new gastronomic experiences. He writes:

"Meals cost seventy-five and fifty cents each, a bed accordingly. Accommodation was tolerable to Moorhead, but in the three staging days things were intolerable. I never tasted butter; beef and potatoes only kept me alive. Bread was an outrage on the name. Potatoes were good if left whole, but when they mashed them you did not know what you had. The beef would do for patent leather soles; you could eat it, but rubbing it on a dirty plate and cleaning a dirty knife in trying to cut it, you ate your peck of dirt certainly. After all, however, I felt none the worse. The next day I was hale and hearty."

Arriving at Breckenridge on Sunday afternoon, like a true Presbyterian he set about to discover a place of worship.

"Found out on inquiry that there was no service but by one man in the place, and that he was sick. Found out he was a Presbyterian and a Scotchman, by calling on him after supper. He had been ill with inflammation of the bowels, but was getting better. They had to get a doctor one hundred and seventeen miles off to attend him. He is from Ohio—originally from Scotland. Has a wife and nine children, one only eighteen months, like our Gi, I suppose. Appears to have had no good time. The good man, among the people, longs to get under the old flag and be among Scotch folk. He is much opposed to present changes, etc., among the American people. Is uncertain whether he will stay here. I am afraid he is too old for the place."

Indeed, it is a land that cannot tolerate the old. The young, the vigorous alone, can keep their feet in this rough and tumble West. He leaves Mr. Thomas, the old Scotch minister, a little less lonely and much comforted, and carries away with him as a token of the old man's gratitude a fur coat, the first he had ever worn, which will stand him in very good stead in the two hundred and nineteen miles of stage journey that wait him.

In Breckenridge he has his first experience of low temperatures. He will have many more before he is done with them. But Robertson enjoys it.

"Had a comfortable sleep after retiring. Piled plaid, overcoat, clothing, etc., over me and felt quite warm. Room was full of snow and water solid ; the thermometer stood at twenty-eight below zero after I got up." "Twenty-eight below" disturbs him but little. Indeed, his philosophic temper and his God-given sense of humour carry him through much. "Can't get away from the place till to-morrow, and hence must rest contented. It takes four days to get through even if no storms come on. If it storms we stay on the way." Sensible man, and, indeed, what else is there to be done?

On Friday evening, the ninth of January, 1874, he drives up the straggling street of shacks and stores that huddled on the bleak prairie about the big stone fort, over which floats the flag of the honourable the Hudson's Bay Company, an unlovely, irregular, but very bustling hamlet, calling itself Winnipeg. There was little welcome for him, no deputation of congregation or social gathering for the incoming minister. He puts up at the Davis Hotel and makes himself as comfortable as he can in that roaring, crowded hostelry till morning.

His first business is to send a wire to his wife, and thus he establishes a line of communication between the West and the home that holds those dear to him far away, a line of communication that will not be closed for over a quarter of a century, though neither he nor they guess that any such heart-stretching is to be their fate. In a letter to his wife, dated January 12th, 1874, he says:

"I called on Bryce on coming in here, and found things not very pleasant. There were no preparations made for boarding, etc., the reason of which perhaps appears in the sequel."

And the sequel is not altogether pleasant. The facts appear to be that some four weeks before the representative of the Canada Presbyterian Church arrived in Winnipeg, the Church of Scotland Synod in Canada had sent in a minister, Rev. Dr. W. Clark, to supply the congregation of Knox Church in the meantime, and to assist in the mission work in which the Church of Scotland was anxious to take part. It will throw much light upon the painful events that follow if we remember that at this date the two branches of the Presbyterian Church, namely, that in sympathy with the Established Church of Scotland, the "Auld Kirk," and that in sympathy with the Free Church of Scotland, had not yet come together, and consequently between these sister Churches so closely allied, there was a very considerable and bitter jealousy, with intense rivalry. Members of both these branches of the Presbyterian Church were living in Winnipeg, and although Knox Church was formally attached to the Presbytery of Manitoba which was erected by the Canada Presbyterian Church, a number of those adhering to the "Auld Kirk" had associated themselves with the congregation and were active and influential members of the same. The simple and just solution of the difficulty which confronted Robertson on his arrival was that Dr. Clark should give place to the man who had been invited by the congregation and had been officially appointed by the authoritative body recognized by the congregation, the Home Mission Committee. But apparently that is just what the reverend and worthy doctor was most unwilling to do. He finds himself in charge of Knox Church. The position is much to his liking. He is a minister of years and standing and he hesitates to surrender at the bidding of this stranger. The delicacy of the situation is sensibly increased by the fact that while the party of the "Auld Kirk" in the congregation are not numerically great, they are socially influential and are decidedly not to be sniffed at.

"So we went down to see Mr. Black," writes Robertson, "about the whole matter—Mr. Bryce and I. They all felt that it would not be fair to me to do anything else than preach if I insisted on it at once, but that it might do harm if that should be done, by the 'Auld Kirk' party thinking that others, *i. e.*, those of our own Church, wished to have things all their own way." Robertson's answer is characteristic and significant: "I told them," he says, "that I expected to preach here, but that I would not for a while say anything, that I had come to help and not to obstruct, that I would not on any account be the means of giving umbrage and leading to the setting up of another church. Consequently, I am going away after about two weeks, up to Palestine, about one hundred miles away, to preach in the place vacated by Mr. McNab. I will stay there for about six weeks and then come back to take charge of this congregation permanently. I did not quite like it, but I suppose it is best." His good sense, his philosophic temper, and, above all, his missionary spirit, help him to his wise self-denial. So off to Palestine (now Gladstone) he will go, one hundred miles west, for six weeks; a field forbidding enough, but possessed of one great lure. "I can, while away, see all the stations up there, and this will save me time again." Besides, he has the hope that by this move the difficulties of the situation will be smoothed out, for "Presbytery meets on the 4th of March, and after that time Dr. Clark, I suppose, will go up to Palestine." But will he? Not if we have rightly estimated the doctor. But we shall see. This settled, he retires with Mr. Bryce to Winnipeg for the night.

We learn how his first Sabbath in the West is spent from his first Winnipeg letter to his wife. That Sabbath is remarkable for this, among other things, that on that day he heard two men preach while he himself preached but once, which arrangement will not often be made again while he remains in the work.

"Went down yesterday," he writes, "to preach for Mr. Black at Kildonan. He has a good congregation, almost all Highland people and their descendants. Their forefathers came here in 1815." But in the afternoon he heard Mr. Black preach, and then in the evening came back to Winnipeg, where he heard Dr. Clark in Knox Church. "I cannot say I like him," he frankly confesses to his wife. Well, hardly. We must not expect too much of a man standing outside and seeing through the window another eating the dinner that should have been his. Besides, preaching, as we shall see, was apparently not Dr. Clark's strong point. What a pity he did not enjoy that sermon! It is the last he will hear for many a day. Hereafter, wherever he is and preaching is being done, Mr. Robertson himself will be doing it.

That day closes as many a day will for him in the years to come, though he knows it not, in homesick loneliness. "Now about home," he writes; "how are you all? I went to the post-office to-day to see if there might not be something, but was disappointed as I might expect, for you have had no time yet. How I would like to look in on you all and see how you are doing! Tina and Willie will be just about going to bed, and what about 'Ba Buddy'? I feel lonesome already without you all. How shall it be before July? You must write me often and regularly else I am afraid I cannot stand it."

The westward trail is a hard trail. Fifteen hundred miles away the children are going to bed without their father's good-night, and he without their warm kisses on his lips. Their mother will need to do for them that night, as for many, many nights to come. Truly the warfare is costly. "He that forsaketh not all that he hath," said the Master. That is true. And He might have said, and He meant, "He that loveth husband more than Me." For as husband and father must pay the price, so that price the lonely wife and mother will pay in the slow, dropping coinage of the heart as the years go on.

XIII

THE MAKING OF A SUPERINTENDENT

NOT every day is a superintendent made. Certainly not in the democratic, independent, individualistic Presbyterian Church of ours with its reverence for the doctrine of the parity of elders. Yet it was no new thing, but as old as John Knox, that ancient church-maker, strong of faith, strong of heart and strong of common sense, as witness his parish school, his catechisms, and his superintendents. So old was the office that few had remembered its existence, and thus it seemed a new thing and fraught with danger as, to some, are all new things. If it is true that poets are born, not made; it is also true that our superintendent was both born and made; born of a good sturdy breed, made, shaped, hammered, ground, polished in the battering Western life till he became God's own instrument for God's good work for Western Canada.

It began with that trip to Palestine which, with the courtesy and common sense that distinguished him, he agreed to take, leaving Dr. Clark in charge of the church at Winnipeg. He had thought to get away to the West by the next week's stage, but the 26th of January still finds him in Winnipeg. Writing to his wife, he says:

"The stage went away yesterday evening and was so loaded with mail matter that it could not take any person. Hence I am here. Was down at Kildonan and am to take one of Mr. Black's horses and keep him while I am away. This is perhaps the best way after all. I am sorry to have lost to-day, however, for it was very fine. Hope for good weather yet. Expect to be away in the morning. Houses for at least sixty miles are all along the way. I am not so sure after, but from that point I expect a guide." Meantime, he is not losing his time. His days are full of work and his moments of observation.

"I preached here yesterday. Day intensely cold in the morning. Attendance good—evening better—I am told it is generally so here. Congregation strongly male and young. Quite a number of them unmarried. They want me very much to take charge of them. I am somewhat apprehensive of trouble unless they are happily settled. We have had a good deal of cold weather since I came. There is not much snow on the ground—not a foot, I think, on the level. There has been keen frost continuously with the exception of a day or two since I arrived. They never have rain here in winter. In consequence of the dryness of the atmosphere and the frosty weather, all can wear moccasins, as almost all do on account of the greater warmth. It looks odd to see men and women going to church moccasined, and especially to see a reverend gentleman," the good Mr. Black, "dressed in *gown and moccasins* ascending the pulpit stairs." However odd it may appear to him, he has all the tenderfoot's desire for new experiences, hence he continues, "Have been presented with a pair, but they are too small, I fear, for me, and I purchased a pair of moose skin for $1.25. Will put them on to go to White Mud or Palestine. In consequence of the dryness of the atmosphere and the keen frost, there is really no good sleighing, for the snow does not pack. You can go anywhere over the prairie."

At length, on the 27th of January, with Mr. Black's "old nag, harness and rig to match," he set forth for Palestine. His account of his trip is interesting. "It was nearly noon ere I came away. I stopped at Headingly at Mr. Mc——'s for dinner. Things were rather primitive, but the people were very kind. Went about nine miles farther and came to a tavern where I stopped for the night. Found a large number of travellers there going up and down." Yes, and, doubtless, took full toll of them concerning country, settlement, crops, schools, stray Presbyterians, church services and all the rest of it. He drives with eyes and ears and heart wide open. "Got a comfortable room—a sort of bedroom. Started away and came to Poplar Point, about sixteen miles, and then nine miles farther to High Bluff. Took dinner at a miserable looking place called a tavern, got a good dinner though, and I hope my horse fared as well." We sincerely hope so too. The true traveller cares for his horse, sorry nag though he be, for upon these Western houseless plains that horse may stand between him and death any day. But this traveller only thinks that his horse means to him transportation and that exploration. "Came out four miles farther to Portage la Prairie, to the Rev. Mr. Matheson's, where I stayed all night." Sat up most of it too, without a doubt, the eager tenderfoot, inquisitive, insistent, shrewdly observant, the old timer overflowing with information, with congenial hospitality and with the burden of the West hard upon him. "From this place to what is called the First Crossing of the White Mud River is about eighteen miles, all prairie, without house or tree. The day was sharp and the roads heavy, owing to a good deal of drift. I set out with good heart, with pony doing but indifferently. Mr. Matheson thought he would not get through. There were some oak posts set up all along the road within every half mile not long ago, but some miscreant cut down the most of them," this same miscreant not unlikely in desperation for firewood upon this treeless plain. We can hardly blame him. "It is a great pity, for it would be almost impossible to find the road in a storm without them. At last I came to the Crossing. Got dinner—a good one—at Bell's tavern, and got horse fed and paid eighty-seven and a half cents. Started for the Second Crossing, and not wishing to try the pony's strength further, concluded to stay there for the night, which I did, at Mr. McR——'s, one of our own people. This is about eight miles from First Crossing. Started next morning and got to Palestine, eight miles farther, but through wrong direction it was at least eleven miles." And no small achievement for a man unused to the plains. For even with oak posts, a drifted trail is easy to lose.

Thus he installs himself in Palestine to put in as best he can the six weeks' time till he gets back to the place properly his in the city. They are the six weeks of severest weather in the year, and do what he will, doubtless the time will seem long. Let his weekly home letter tell.

"Visited,"—visited! The word arrests us with its familiar ring. We shall hear that word frequently from his lips. "I visited the people." Is there a difficulty in a mission station? "I visited the people." Is there a deficit in the missionary's salary? Is there a new settlement to be explored and organized? It is always the same phrase. "I visited the people." The letter goes on, "visited all the families," note that comprehensive adjective, "at Second Crossing when there—six, and a couple of bachelors. All those do not belong to us. There is a good deal of land owned by our people there, and if the field is looked after things will do well with God's blessing. Came over then to Pine Creek on Thursday, found a young girl of about fifteen very ill in one house. Doctor over thirty miles away and family not well off." What then will he do? He is a traveller, his journey is imperative. He is a minister. Does he offer spiritual comfort and depart, leaving behind him his benediction? No, not he. This minister is also a man, and so, "I advised the mother to go and see the doctor at once, and not being able to get a horse, gave them mine. They were to be back on Saturday, but the doctor being away, they returned only on Sabbath at four o'clock, just in time for me to go to Pine Creek to preach. Got another person to take me to Palestine." For he must keep his appointment. His main business in this country is to preach the Gospel after all.

As he visits the settlement with his eyes wide open for everything, the serious social and economic disability under which the country is suffering begins to attract his attention, the deplorable lack, namely, of the softening, humanizing, prophylactic influences of womankind.

"Pine Creek settlement," he writes, "is not large, and most of the persons having claims are bachelors. I never knew a better chance for old maids—anything will go here. Women have come here that would never have had an offer in Canada, and they have been picked up in a trice, and that by good-looking, active fellows, one by a man at least ten years younger. I wish I had a boatload here, for they would soon be disposed of and that to their own advantage. He would be a public benefactor who would bring women here—a benefactor to this land and to that left." It is perhaps not unnecessary to explain that though this latter observation may seem to be a joke, the situation in Western Canada at that day was anything but a joke, and the wisdom of the remark a wider experience will only illustrate and emphasize. More than once Robertson refers to this.

In a later letter he says, "There are quite a number of bachelors here. Many of them are not clean. For this I make no excuse. Can you not get some hopeless cases of old maids coaxed to come here. Good chances wait them. A man with a large family of girls coming here would be considered a public benefactor. The bachelors I have visited would make your heart sore to see them. Some of the men have been here a year or more, and it would not be true to say that a plate, spoon, table, pot, frying-pan or anything else had been washed since. They cook no porridge, but the layers of grease and dirt are indescribable."

"But," for he is no matrimonial agency, "to return. Called on all the families but two bachelors. Got a Mr. Whaley to take me to Palestine Saturday night. Had a good congregation on Sabbath at all the services and a good deal of interest manifested. Hope they may continue to turn out. Announced school meeting at Pine Creek and was persuaded to remain and help them start a school. Did so, and we got all things arranged to build a house when spring opens. Logs, etc., are to be got out at once and as soon as it is possible the house is to be raised and then by letting it in small jobs it is to be finished." He is to be in the district only a few weeks, yet he seizes the opportunity offering and guides the people in the organizing and directing of the first school building that district has ever seen. "I expect," he continues, "to see a school next winter." Next winter! What of Norwich? Unconsciously the country has claimed him already. "I am going to get one on foot here—I helped to start one at Second Crossing. This will be doing good as well as preaching to the people, I hope." Not a doubt of it, oh, most valiant son of Knox! "There are not many settlers yet, but they expect a good number in the spring and summer. There are quite a number of children here now, for all the families are large, and with those coming in spring, will afford plenty material for a school in each neighbourhood." Yes, schools and plenty of them, with collegiate institutions and university as well, before your day is done!

He finds Palestine sadly lacking in organization. They had had a minister, but the work had proved too difficult for him and he had resigned. There was little or no organization of the work. Robertson takes hold with firm hand. In a letter to his wife, under date February 20th, 1874, he says:

"Have been making some arrangements for the organization of congregations here. Called the Palestine congregation together and had $186 subscribed on the spot. We will get at least $225 at Pine Creek, and the Second Crossing of the White Mud, as the river is called, will give $100 more. There must be a station also, at the First Crossing of the White Mud. This White Mud is a river that enters Lake Manitoba, and being very crooked in its course, the road to the Saskatchewan crosses the river three times as the river runs from west to east.

"Visited about thirty or more families here in the three places, and many more are coming in in the spring. I have got up a petition and want to take it down to Winnipeg to the meeting of Presbytery so as to have them organize at once. We must send here with them a *good* minister, if possible, else the cause will suffer. Should such a minister be here, I am inclined to think our cause would soon be strong and that the church would be self-sustaining. The families are widely scattered just now, but soon the spaces will be filled. Many of the people are poor yet, but a few years must make a change."

He sees clearly even now and later years only make his vision the clearer, that the great essential for successful missionary work is permanent organization with a good minister in charge. Oh, if only a good minister, that *rara avis*, could be discovered and be persuaded to give himself to the cause in such a spot! There is growing up in his heart a sense of responsibility for the country and a loyalty to the cause hitherto unknown to him. In the same letter occurs another word of significance and prophetic import:

"I wrote a letter to the congregation in Norwich, and so you had better go down at once and get a reading of it or hear it read. It is in connection with mission work here. I wrote one to Mr. B—— and also to Mr. D——. I am going to write to Mr. McK—— to-day, and to others. I think I must write a letter to Mr. M—— and a few others." He finds time amid his many and pressing activities, to write a formal letter to his congregation as well as some half dozen others to friends, giving pictures of the country, of its needs and its opportunities. This is the beginning of a habit that will grow upon him year by year, a habit fraught with tremendous results both to country and to Church, but a habit that will rob him of many hours of sleep and will do much to rob the Church of years of his service.

He is greatly impressed with the country, and takes pains to acquaint himself with its resources, the experiences of the settlers, their prospects for the future. He writes:

"I could wish that all my brothers were settled here on 320 or 640 acres of land. I am half in the notion of coming out here myself. It is a much better country for a poor man than Ontario. We could take up land for our children and keep them with us here much better than in Canada," (in *Canada*, note) "and when they would grow up we would be in better circumstances to give them a good education. What do you say? I am anxious to take up some land, at any rate, and wish I could invest a few thousand dollars." He is too much a Scot, too sensible a man and too good a Christian to fail to lay plans whereby he should be able to provide for his own. Ah, if he only could get a few thousand dollars! But so far during the years of his ministry at Norwich, plain in his living as he is, and thrifty as his wife may be, they have been able to save, as he tells us in another place, at the utmost only one thousand dollars. That he could save as much is greatly to his credit. It were well that he should invest this now. His chance will never be better, and in the future there will be too many needy missionaries and missions to permit the accumulation of many thousands. "Just now," he continues, "there is a good chance, but next summer hundreds, yes, thousands, will come in here and get as good claims as they can. There is plenty of open prairie, but for a short time there must be good land along the rivers. . . . The country is much better than people in Ontario think. If a person can buy a claim along a river where there is a good deal of wood, he is much more comfortable than even in Ontario during winter. I think I never enjoyed a winter better than this one. Grain may, nay, will not, sell at so high a figure as in Ontario, but it will pay as well because you can raise it more easily. Stock, likewise, can be much more easily raised, and hence must pay well. Milk, I am told, is much richer than in Canada. You can make much more butter from a cow than in Ontario. To a poor man this is a much better country. To all sober, industrious men this land will be a boon.

"I have visited a good many of the people and have inquired about how they like the country, and find almost universal satisfaction. None of those with whom I met would return to Canada. There is no wealth here, but men in a few years will be comfortable. Things must be rude and not very pleasant for a time, but that is always the case in a new country. Time will effect a great change. I have been saying that in two or three years, if spared, *we* must come West here, at any rate to see the country. It would be quite a sight to see miles of roses—rose-bushes in bloom—to see the prairie for miles, as far as the eye can reach, sometimes, in bloom. One crop of flowers succeeds another, and it is only the winter's frost that puts an end to this luxuriant herbage. For ages this has gone on one year after another, and I have often imagined how the land of prairie chickens, geese and ducks and all kinds of fowl, of buffalo and deer, has for ages been kept till man should come and by the plough claim it for his own. The wonderful provision of the Creator in this respect often claims serious thought. Here a hardy race must spring up, a race to play an important part in future."

Later on he finds opportunities for investing which, with faith in the future of the country, he embraces.

"I wrote you a note on Saturday which I hope you will receive in due time. I stated there that I had purchased land, one hundred and sixty acres. . . . I purchased now because in this country wood and water are of great importance, and there is for that lot plenty of both. The wood here affords splendid shelter. I paid, as I told you, $155 for the one hundred and sixty acres. I bought a volunteer warrant and put that on the lot and thus saved five dollars. All the volunteers that came up here got a warrant from the Canadian Government entitling them to one hundred and sixty acres of land. They could locate there wherever they liked. Instead of locating them, many sold them for forty or fifty dollars at first. But owing to the greater number of people coming into the country, and the fact that the Government will not sell more than six hundred and forty acres to any one man, these warrants have risen in value. . . . I have reserved the right of buying from Government at any rate six hundred and forty acres after this if I please.

"I am going to look about while I am here and try and invest the little I can command for future use. I do not know how much I can command after paying expenses, but think we might invest in all about one thousand dollars. . . . There are no municipal taxes or anything of the kind just now, and I do not think there will be much of that kind for years to come. There will, of course, be school tax, but what amount I do not know. I think, however, that there will be no such tax as in Canada. For school purposes I am willing to help. . . . I might say that there are not many settlers here yet. The population of the province, exclusive of Indians, is not more than fifteen thousand. The Canadians are in a few settlements, mostly Sunnyside and Springfield, Rockwood, Portage la Prairie, Burnside, High Bluff, Palestine, etc. A large number are expected next summer, however, and a good deal of land near us will be taken up. If I wish to sell in five years, I expect, at the least calculation, to double my investment. But as I jokingly told you in my last letter, I think we shall all move out here yet. I have enjoyed myself a good deal this winter, and think that I could live happily here. There is a much better chance for a poor man—and who poorer than a minister—to get along. The only thing wanting is a railway, and that must come before long. It is true people cannot get such a price for wheat here, but they can raise more of it and easier, and that will make up for the price. But I think I must write a few letters for one of your Woodstock papers, and then you can have my views more in detail."

Like many another investor of that period, he had to wait for many years for the profits from these investments. But before many years have passed he will have forgotten all about investments in land.

During this Palestine pastorate of six weeks he is continually storing up and cataloguing a vast amount of varied information that will serve as fuel for the fires of his own enthusiasm and will serve to kindle those same fires in others as well. Difficulties and privations he meets with, of course, but those disturb him not. His philosophic temper and his quick sense of humour carry him through everything with a shrug and a smile. The following experience will recall to the early missionaries and settlers of the West many of a similar kind.

"I have had some rough experience. Have been boarding in a place in which there is but one room. It is not easy to rise or go to bed comfortably. Manage to make a screen of my coat and vest on the back of a chair while I get off my pants and go to bed. It is rather amusing, but what can you do? People are up before me in the morning, and I avail myself of the wife going out after water, etc., to spring out of bed and get dressed. They sleep upstairs, but how they keep from coming through the floor is more than I know. They are very kind, and are very much afraid I may take cold in their not very warm house. You would laugh to see the wife coming to stuff the clothes around my back before going to sleep herself, when she thinks I am asleep and not well covered. They are from the 'Island of Prince Edward,' as they call it, and are of Celtic origin." In return for which kindness he gives his Highland hostess from the "Island of Prince Edward" some much needed lessons in the art of preparing the roast of beef for the fire and in the cooking of the same. Experiences of another kind he has as well, more exciting than pleasant. "We had considerable trouble at election. Free fight. One man stabbed, but he is getting better. I am sorry to say that our Canadian people are more to blame than the half-breeds."

But the time is wearing on. The congregation at Palestine and the other stations are growing rapidly. The services are well attended though held under discouraging circumstances, but these will disappear.

"The roads between the stations are not good. I have to break a road every Sabbath. There is no teaming that way. The driving, however, does not appear to hurt me in any way. I have never felt better. Our meetings are all held in private houses, and often we can scarcely accommodate those who come. Last Sabbath the people had to go on beds, etc., to make room. Soon schoolhouses will be available for service and churches will be erected."

He is due in Winnipeg about the middle of March and, consequently, he arranges that his hundred mile drive shall become a missionary tour—his first in the country. So:

"Next Monday I go away to Portage la Prairie. I am going to preach at the First Crossing on Monday night on my way down. I did not hear from Matheson, but expect he will be here the Sabbath following. I go away from the First Crossing on Tuesday morning and go to Rat Creek to Mr. McK——'s. Go from there to the Portage the next day and attend a missionary meeting there and in High Bluff the day following. The Monday following I go away to Winnipeg, which I expect to reach on Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning." A not inconsiderable programme this, for the blizzard season, over trails unmarked for the most part and drifted, and that old nag none too reassuring in his powers of endurance. "On the whole," he concludes, "I am glad I came up here to encourage and get the people to take active measures for organization."

The superintendent is by no means yet made. But there is a beginning of that in him which will never die and which, through the grace of God working in the heart of him together with the daily experience which will be his, of the needs and opportunities of this new land, will shape him for this high place and for great work.

XIV

A WINNIPEG EXPERIMENT

THESE were the ante-union days. Negotiations for union were being carried on between the Church of Scotland in Canada, popularly known as the Kirk, and the Canada Presbyterian Church. The issue was still doubtful, and for all who were desirous of seeing one great Presbyterian Church in the Dominion, it was a time of great anxiety. As is almost always the case, the danger to the cause of union and the delay in its consummation arose not so much from essential differences in foundation principles, but from local and often personal rivalries and jealousies, the very existence of which was one of the strongest arguments for union. Throughout the whole of Canada the greatest interest was taken by Presbyterians in the discussions, and in many places intense feeling was aroused. This was true of the congregation of Knox Church, in far-away Winnipeg. Here, though the congregation had been formally received by the Presbytery of Manitoba and was, therefore, a congregation of the Canada Presbyterian Church, there was a very influential portion of the congregation adhering to the Kirk who naturally were anxious to secure the greatest advantage possible for their own party. The result was strife which only became more bitter as the congregation grew in strength by accessions from the East, and as the prospects of union became more and more cloudy.

With the congregation in this condition, Mr. Robertson took charge. It was a situation requiring the guiding of a man of strong common sense, of fairness, and of a high sense of duty. And it is no small tribute to Mr. Robertson that he was not found wanting. He takes his wife into his confidence in regard to affairs in the congregation as follows:

"Things here are not in a good state. The two parties in the church are quite distinct, and they are likely to continue so, as far as I can judge. They have been jealous of each other all along, and the prospect of a failure of union in June is having an influence just now. I am afraid that both parties were for union on the condition that things should be more or less in their own hands. It was perhaps unfortunate that four-fifths of the congregation should be Canada Presbyterians and the remaining part only belonging to the Kirk, but so it is. The most of the Kirk party are men of influence and respectability, while the other party, although having several men of wealth and high social standing, are more or less socially below them. This has had its influence. It became with the Kirk party a question of patronage because of their position, etc., and to this the other would not submit. It looked as if the former were saying, 'We will give respectability and social standing to the church, we will give considerable cash, too, but you must let us have things our own way, and get our minister in the church.' The other party could not be expected to do that, and here they took issue. I believe this question has a great deal to do with the present state of things.

"Some time ago elders were chosen, and organization was asked and granted by the Manitoba Presbytery. This gave offense, because by this action the congregation became connected with the Canada Presbyterian Church. The Old Kirk party could not accept office as elders because to do so, since the church is in connection with the Canada Presbyterian Church, they must join that Church. This they could not do. The congregation drew up a constitution and came to presbytery to sanction it. Presbytery did so, and this again was another grievance. Dr. Clark then was sent for by the Kirk party in a quiet way, to come up here and it was supposed that in the general chaos he would be elected pastor, because supposed to be superior to anything here. This, too, failed. Then again Dr. Clark was sent away and I was taken in here to preach. I told them that I was not a candidate present or prospective for the pulpit, and that if they gave a call to Dr. Clark or anybody else, I was prepared to resign my position to-morrow, but that I would and could not in deference to anybody, give Dr. Clark the pulpit now. I came here to supply the pulpit and no other did so, at the request of the congregation, at personal sacrifice—congregational and family sacrifice—and if they would not agree to fulfill their part of the arrangement, I would at once go away—I represent the Church in Canada and could not yield to Old Kirk or any other.

"The whole of the Canada Presbyterian people are of one mind in having me here. The Governor and the other party come to church regularly, and I am on good terms with them. I am only blamed, I suppose, because I happen to be acceptable as a preacher. It is exceedingly unpleasant, but I suppose I must make the best of it."

Sensible man he is, but none the less is the situation vexing to his soul. Through the weeks that follow the unhappy squabble goes on. Meantime, the congregations are growing in numbers and the services in interest, so he wisely resolves to keep out of the trouble and let the parties fight out their foolish petty fight between themselves. And indeed, there is no need for him to interfere, for both parties appear to be under sufficiently able generalship.

"I am happily not in the matter at all," he writes under date April 30th, 1874. "The difficulty is between themselves and Professor B——. He has been working in the interests of our Church, as he ought, but still for the common good. The other party thought he was doing for the Canada Presbyterian Church altogether. Hence, everything was looked on with suspicion." It was a condition fruitful in mutual misunderstanding, the most innocent deeds and words being misinterpreted, as witness, "The late trouble was with Dr. Clark. It appears that Professor B—— in speaking to Dr. Clark, said that if this contention and strife were to continue, that if there was no way of peace, it was the opinion of some men in the congregation that it would be better to separate. The Doctor then asked who they were that would be apt to go. Professor B—— replied that he did not now know, he only knew those who were Old Kirk in their antecedents. This was only what any person might have said. The construction put on his words is, that the Canada Presbyterian Church party wish the others to leave the church, which is quite another matter. Feeling has run high about this whole matter for a week or two; now all other grievances are not thought of in comparison with this last. I do not think they will go off.

"I am personally and as a preacher not in the case at all. I understand that even Mr. McM—— who is the head of the other party, speaks very favourably of my preaching. Governor Morris still attends. He was there last Sabbath and I had quite a chat with him after service was over. He appears to be a quiet nice man. If he was alone there would be no trouble. It is a great pity Dr. Clark is here at all." With which all will devoutly agree.

XV

A MISSIONARY MINISTER

FULLY occupied though he is with his congregation, he never loses his touch with the mission work in the new country. On his return from Palestine he makes his report to Presbytery in regard to his experience while West. He carries with him a petition from the Palestine congregation signed by over eighty people, asking for organization, and promising three hundred dollars for the first year, should they get a minister. The fathers and brethren listen amazed to his story. The extraordinary vigour of the man, his resourcefulness, his promptitude in seizing the favourable opportunity and in getting things done, impresses them much. He has been in the country less than three months and yet during that short period he has firmly gripped the mission situation and has gathered such a store of facts about the country and the people as to astonish those who have been there years before him. And no wonder, for they have each been so heavily burdened with their own immediate labours that they have allowed a new world to grow up about them of which they have only the vaguest knowledge.

The Presbytery granted the petition from Palestine, erecting it into a supplemented congregation and by a formal vote, recorded its appreciation of the efficient service rendered.

"And to reward me," he writes, "sent me back to Portage la Prairie, High Bluff and Burnside, to try and organize there. Ministers here apparently are afraid of speaking of money to the people, and I am supposed to have cheek for any business of that kind. Mr. Matheson, their own minister, and Mr. Fraser are to be there, but it appears that I am to have charge of the money. I go away to-morrow morning and am to be back for next Sabbath."

The story of that trip he shares, as he shares all his experiences, with his wife. The letter is dated from Winnipeg, March 16th, 1874:

"MY DEAR MARY ANNE:—

"When I wrote last week I told you I was going away to the West as far as Burnside, by appointment of presbytery, to hold meetings in reference to their petition for ordained supply. We left here Tuesday morning, Mr. Fraser and myself, with a snail-paced horse. Got as far as White Horse Plains, twenty-six miles from Winnipeg. The day was clear but frosty and we got on well. Next day we stopped at a tavern to water Mr. Fraser's horse. I went into the supposed barroom to warm. Found at the door quite a strong smell—saw a stove and a couple of calves warming themselves at it—milk pails and a general litter on the table. Faced left about and saw another calf at the foot of a flight of stairs with a litter of straw, and thought I was there long enough and had seen enough. Mr. Fraser comes in after me, takes in the whole situation at once. A door opens at the rear of calf-parlour and the kitchen stove is seen in full blast. The host informs us that he entertains bovine and not human guests for the present, and we leave, ruminating over the beauties of prairie scenery. Got dinner in good style at Poplar Point, about seventeen miles from any houses. Charley was fed some barley but did not eat it. Felt afraid he was going to give out, but he did very well. Rather an amusing incident occurred. We both got out of the cariole and let the horse go on. He walked slowly, and when we came up to him we gave him two or three cuts and sent him on his way rejoicing. This was done several times, the horse trotting away for some distance and then slackening till we overtook him. At last when he would see us coming near he would run off before we got up to him. Finally, we got tired and wanted to ride, but Charley felt shy, and when we called Whoa, he would dart off and leave us behind. This was very amusing for a time, but when we began to contemplate walking all the way it was serious. We stole up quietly behind Charley, and before he saw, Mr. Fraser got so near that although Charley started off, Mr. Fraser got a hold of the cariole behind. After some running, he managed to leap on board and stopped him.

"We got to Poplar Point in good time, got tea at Mr. F——'s brother's and went away to the meeting. They had got it announced that I was going to preach, and we found a good congregation gathered. Told Mr. Fraser that Presbytery had sent us on a purely business errand, but that I would preach if so announced. Did so and held a meeting after to see what they would give if they got service every Sabbath instead of every alternate Sabbath." He is instinctively finding his way. This method of mingling business and preaching he will prove during many years of experiment, to be sound and profitable. First he will hold up to men's wonder and gratitude the marvellous benefits of the Gospel, then call upon their loyalty in its support. And wherever the Gospel has found a home in the heart, there the call will never fail of response. "We got one hundred and fifty dollars subscribed, and some three heads of families yet to see. This is about double of what we got last year. Had meeting at Portage la Prairie Thursday forenoon and had elders to ordain. Preached and addressed elders, and

Mr. Fraser the people. Held other meeting after and explained the whole case to people. Got one hundred and fifty dollars subscribed, and this will be made up to two hundred dollars at least. Went back to Mr. Matheson's (Mr. M—— is missionary here) for dinner and went to Burnside for the evening. Had a good meeting. Got Mr. F—— coaxed to preach as I did not wish to do all the work. He consented on the understanding that I would do all the money talk. We got one hundred and twenty-one dollars, with the prospect of one hundred dollars more. Think we will get about five hundred and sixty dollars. This where only two hundred and eighty dollars at most, was promised (promised but not yet paid) last year. This year only some five hundred dollars all told given to missions. That Western field will itself with Palestine give nine hundred dollars, not to speak of Springfield and Sunnyside, Rockwood, Little Britain, Headingly, etc." To persuade people in their circumstances to increase their givings from $280 to $560 is a good bit of work well done, for money is scarce as yet in the country and with many the church is the last thing paid for. The fire, however, is burning in his own heart. He does not blame the people so much. They are not ungenerous. They are poor enough, and they have not yet caught the glow of missionary enterprise. The great need as he sees it is that of leadership. "The great difficulty is the sort of men they have here. There is no push, no system. Men are men of small ideas and little zeal. I do hope they may get some vigorous man to take hold in Winnipeg and work up the whole province. . . . I sometimes get out of patience with some of the men here. The Church has lost a great deal by not having the right material in the field. I have written privately to Mr. Cochrane about the whole matter." We should much like to have a reading of that letter, for he has a fine gift of descriptive phrases in such cases. More and more he is beginning to feel the pull of this magnificent work. "People wish me to take some Western field. What would you say to High Bluff or Portage la Prairie or Palestine? Should I come, one man says he will give fifty dollars. He now gives twenty-five dollars. Another will give twenty-five dollars who gives five dollars now. How would you like to be out on the prairie or on the lee side of a poplar bluff? I told everybody that I had a congregation at home and could think of nothing but them now." This last we venture to doubt. He is loyal to his congregation, but mighty thoughts are moving beneath that bit of pleasant suggestion to his wife whose heart will beat the quicker with premonitory fears as she reads.

Finishing his work, he goes back to Winnipeg, but not without incident through which his sense of humour sustains him.

"Got a man to take me down to Poplar Point Friday, so that I might come with the mail Saturday. Got down in good time. Very stormy through night. Up at 3:15 A. M., stopped at mail driver's house. Had a shake-down on floor—he on spree night before. Got up at 3:15—thought he was to get ready, and I got up and dressed. He went to bed again and there I was. Got a fire on and after some time wife, etc., got up and got breakfast. At daylight we got off. Wind blew furiously and snow drifted badly. Crossed over large prairies but did not find it difficult to go. Changed horses twice and got to Winnipeg at 2 P. M., forty-two miles, tired out." And small wonder, poor soul, and with the duties of the morrow waiting him which he discharges as follows: "Preached yesterday—twice here and in the afternoon at Kildonan for Mr. Black. Congregations very good."

Now he must buckle down to his congregational work which sadly wants doing, so he congratulates himself: "I have no more work to do outside now than what I may do of my own accord—at least I think so." Let us hope so indeed. But from the little we have seen we may not be blamed if we ask leave to doubt.

With all energy he throws himself into his congregational work, but through it all he is conscious that this wretched bickering of the two parties, stand aloof as he will, chills his spirit and hampers him in his ministerial labours. He has never yet preached with his accustomed freedom, but he will continue to do his best.

"I am going to undertake visitation as soon as possible. I think we will take two or three families every evening as we can. Hope to get Mr. McV—— or some other of the elders with me. We have a prayer-meeting on Wednesday and I take charge. Young men's class in the Sabbath-school I conduct too. Plenty of work for me to do all the time I am here, but must do the best I can with it. I felt very much the difficulty here of which I heard nothing till I came. Hope for the best, but do not expect that the Old Kirk party and our people will ever get on well here." And so through the spring months he toils away at his preaching and his visitations, his classes and his meetings. But deep as he gets into his congregational work, he has ever an eye for the larger movements in the Church and the country about him.

On the 30th of April he writes to his wife, with whom he shares his every experience:

"Bryce and myself got up a Home Mission scheme and presented it to Presbytery. Till that time Fraser goes west to Portage la Prairie, Mr. McKellar goes to Palestine, Currie to Rockwood, Vincent to Pembina and Emerson settlements. Mr. Fraser is to moderate in a call to Palestine in June and Donaldson in Portage la Prairie. I got my plan carried out in dividing this field, and I hope that Matheson will be called and settled here at once when he comes back. Palestine people think of calling Mr. Ferguson of Glenmorris. Things are moving on energetically and if some push was manifested, we would soon take a leading part." Energetically enough if only one could be found to pour the hot fire of this man's enthusiasm into scheme, system or plan. One wonders how the fathers and brethren of the Presbytery regard this arranging and rearranging of fields, this calling and settling of men. Do they realize what is happening? Doubtless some do and the nobler souls are rejoicing. But have a care, young man, you are very considerable of a tenderfoot as yet!

The country, with its present needs and its prospects, ever stirs his eager interest.

"I am afraid," he writes about the middle of April, "that the river will not break up for some time yet, although should such weather as we have continue, I would not wonder to see it open by the first of May. Am afraid a change will set in in a day or two again, and then we would get another siege of slush. I am informed that the Missouri River is open right up to the boundary line; if so, the Red will soon be open too. I am afraid that if not, it will be difficult to get mails out or in for about a month. Frost is not out of the ground at all yet. I am not sure it ever gets out. They have moved a building away from a lot on the front street, and they commenced digging a cellar. Frost was down under the building six feet! They are boring the ground and blasting with gunpowder as if it were rock! It certainly beats all I have ever seen in the shape of frost. The roads here, however, never wait for the frost to get out before drying up. A good part of the road is dry now, although only thawed to the depth of a few inches. Should rain come, however, I am afraid things will be in an awful mess. It is heavy to-day and such may be the issue. The city is not drained or sidewalked yet, and it is difficult to get away from the main street. The Council are going to do something this summer, I understand. All people provide themselves with boots for the mud. Dr. Clark bought a pair and paid fourteen dollars for them ! They are like my high boots with this difference, that there was a lining of leather opposite the seams. They are supposed to be water-tight, but I do not know. I am not to invest in that line."

Canny Scot ! Let Dr. Clark experiment if he likes. He will tie on his rubbers and wade through the Winnipeg mud, tenacious, greasy and black though it be. "Rubbers are good, but no person can keep them on unless tied to the boot or foot. Mud is very tenacious, greasy and black. I think the whole is the deposit at the bottom of a lake. There is no making of a road from such stuff. It is all good, dry and hard in a short time, but when wet, I am told, you go down—down—down till you can't get *downer.* The great wonder to me is, how coolly the people take the whole matter. I begin to think now that Manitobans can put up with any sort of thing—cold, mud, peace or rebellion." But philosophic as Manitobans may be, there are certain things even they cannot endure. "There has been a good deal of discontent in the city because of the delay in commencing public works. The greater part of the country has had no crop for two years and grain of all kinds having to be imported, money has gone out rapidly. Hence, there is little or none here just now, nor is there anything to bring it in but public works till people can export provisions. Having to import food, clothes, etc., and having only the little money from the fur trade and that brought in by immigrants, the amount is small. Hence the desire that the Government should spend as much money as possible till the Province should grow a little. We think things are more favourable now. There has been a great scarcity of employment so far. The most of the men here are now engaged, but yet many are seen lounging about the city. Of course, if a person has enough to keep him he can go out and work on a farm and do well, but if not, there has not been a great deal to do here this spring, and board is very high. The weather has been favourable for spring work, and every person is putting in all he has. Government has been furnishing seed wheat at two dollars per bushel to all who wished to buy. The spring was not so late as we would think. Wheat was sown here on the 29th of April, and farther west I suppose earlier."

With the Red River farmers, too, this spring is one full of trial.

"Things are very slack here just now," he observes. "There is little or no money in the country. All along the Red River there was no crop last year. Grain and provisions were brought in from Minnesota, and money went out in exchange for it. This has left the country bare of all money. The old settlers here are not rich. In the early days they had no market, properly speaking, for their grain, and often they put in none at all because they had enough. They lived on from year to year and sowed and reaped much as you get your wood. If you have a good pile there is no need of getting the sawing-machine this year. Many, in fact most of them, cultivated but little strips of land, enough to keep them well. Now there is a good market, but grasshoppers have troubled them for two years, so that no crop has been raised." But already the optimism of the West has possessed his soul. Not even the devastating grasshoppers can damp his spirit, so he continues, "They think that there will be none this year, and if so quite a change will take place. Of course, they did not trouble the whole province. At the Portage and west of that there was a good crop. Heard a few days ago the lowest estimate of Mr. McK——'s crop. He is a farmer west of Portage. This is from himself.

Wheat at least	3,000	bushels at	$1.50 =	$4,500.00
Barley “ “	1,000	“ “	1.25 =	1,250.00
Onions “ “	300	“ “	2.50 =	750.00
Potatoes “	1,000	“ “	1.00 =	1,000.00
Peas and Oats	150	“ “	1.00 =	150.00
Carrots and Turnips	500	“ “	.50 =	250.00
				$7,900.00

This is the crop, exclusive of all he made from stock, and this is the lowest estimate. What he made was nearer $10,000. He made a great deal from stock, selling cows at from fifty to seventy dollars, and oxen at two hundred dollars and upwards per yoke. He is, however, the largest farmer in the country. Such prices cannot be realized for another year, I think, but yet for a good time to come there must be a good market."

His optimism is of the kind that demands exact knowledge. His insatiable greed for statistics is beginning to assert itself. Occasionally he allows himself to take the wings of hearsay and soar into the regions of prophecy.

"A good many people are expected in here this year; they think about five thousand will come. There is plenty of land for them, and I trust it may be taken up. Government is going to build a railroad from Pembina to Winnipeg next summer. It is also going to put a bridge across Red River, and put up several public buildings. This will cost a good deal, and hence a good deal of money must be spent in the next summer in employment of men. Wages have been very high all along, but I think that they must be lower. A larger number of people will be employed on land this year that were about the city last summer because no land was cultivated." But his mind soon swings back to his own special business. "Quite a stir was made here by a sale of lots in the town of Totogan at the foot of Lake Manitoba. A large number bought lots at one hundred dollars, fifty feet by one hundred and twenty. Did not care to invest in that town site, but got a lot for our Church there by getting Bryce to buy one. We have numbers thirty-seven and thirty-eight on the map—a corner, as you see. We have a fund here for such purposes. I am going to recommend the Presbytery to give services there next summer and connect it with the First Crossing of the White Mud. We must live in the future here, and if I can give any life to things here I must do so." Where Totogan is in this day of grace, none but the old timers know. But wherever it is, let us hope that corner lot is registered in the name of the Presbyterian Church.

He has now been away from his wife and family for three months and a half, and occupied as he is with congregational, Church and State affairs, in the pauses of his work he feels keenly this his first separation from those he loves, and his letter closes as ever with a word of tender longing and of loneliness.

"Kiss our children for me. Hope you are all well and that you enjoy yourselves. Would wish much to have you even for an hour, but must say nothing. Time will soon pass. Have only eleven more Sabbaths. That won't be long passing if all spared and well."

And once more the mother kisses the children, tucking them safely in bed and sets herself to wait for the passing of eleven more Sabbaths, with never a thought of the long vista of lonely Sabbaths the years will bring her.

XVI

THE CALL TO KNOX CHURCH, WINNIPEG

THERE could be only one issue to Mr. Robertson's period of service in Knox Church. During the few weeks of his ministry he had seized the congregational helm with so firm a grip, had directed its course through fogs and storms with such unerring skill, that the hearts of the members of his congregation turned to him as the only one in sight to whom they could with confidence intrust themselves. About the middle of April the question of a call began to be mooted. At this time he was confidentially approached by one of the most influential of the citizens of Winnipeg, one of his own elders, to discover whether he would under any circumstances consider a call. As we have seen, opportunities for settling in the West had been offered him by the congregations of High Bluff and Palestine, but to all he gave the same answer. In a letter to his wife he discusses the question.

"I told him that I did not come with a view to settle in the country, and that I was on the best of terms with my own people, and hence never thought of a change. He wished me very much to do so, and expressed himself confidently as to the future of the congregation should I consent to be pastor. What do you say to this? If I wish to stay in Manitoba it is evident I can, if not in one place, certainly in another. What does mamma say? Shall I put my foot down and say no? There is much, very much here to do. It would be no easy charge, but I am not sure that work is to be shirked. But what about poor Norwich? They would think it treason should they hear that I was speaking so.

"None of these things are of my seeking. I may say, however, that I do not feel at home here—never preached satisfactorily here yet. Nor am I getting much better. Am not quite myself, am bilious. I am afraid of Red River water in spring. They say its tendency is to produce biliousness. Feel a good deal the distracted state of the congregation, too, and am annoyed. What am I to say to these people?"

A month passed. The matter of a call was earnestly discussed pro and con. One great difficulty in the way of his accepting was the attitude of the Old Kirk party. The adherents of that party were seriously hampered in their line of action by the fact that they were still uncertain as to the result of the union negotiations then proceeding. Should the union fall through, the rivalry between the Churches would, doubtless, be keener than ever, in which case loyalty would forbid members of the Old Kirk party amalgamating with those of the Canada Presbyterian Church. It was for them a truly difficult situation and, indeed, for all. Robertson's engagement would terminate by the end of June. People were pouring in every week. The interests of the congregation demanded that some man should be in charge continuously during the summer. About the middle of May a congregational meeting unanimously agreed to ask Presbytery for moderation in a call, offering two thousand dollars stipend but, of course, mentioning no name, though it was perfectly understood that only one man was in the mind of the congregation. Leave was granted by the Presbytery and thus for Robertson the situation became acute. In a letter to his wife of May 15th, 1874, he goes over the matter thus:

"The moderation is to take place in June, and Presbytery meets in July according to appointment, for Presbytery granted the prayer of the congregation at its last meeting on Wednesday. If I am called then what is to be done? I am not asked and can say nothing. I had to promise Presbytery to give a day or, if necessary, two in July. The position is very difficult. Professor Bryce is away in Canada and is not going to return till the fall. He is collecting for the college. Dr. Clark is away, but going to return in July. Another man cannot come here till after I am through and they do not want one if I am called."

His difficulties increase as time goes on. By the end of May he and Dr. Black are left almost alone in the whole Western field. No relief can be expected till the middle of July. Presbytery begs him to remain for the first two Sabbaths of that month, and anxious as he is to return to his congregation and his home, there is nothing for it but that he should agree to the Presbytery's request. He cannot bring himself to think of leaving the Western fields in such desperate straits. Desperate, indeed, must they have been before he would venture to write his wife in the following strain:

"If I agree to stay here if called, I suppose I cannot return to Canada at all. Could you all come out without me? Mr. and Mrs. Bryce are coming out in September. Could you come then with them? My whole mind gets in rebellion when I think of it, and yet I do not know what I am to do. I do not think I am justified in putting my own feelings in opposition to the best interests of the cause here, and evidently the cause here is of great consequence in the beginning of the history of the province. I wish very much I had some good man to consult with. Bryce says he would accept at once if in my place. Of course, the place is better than Norwich, and will be all the time growing. There is more of a chance here, too, to do well. My only fear is that I am not strong enough for it. If the congregation unanimously call, I shall be in a great perplexity. I am trying beforehand to think of what is to be done if the call comes."

That must have been a hard letter to write and a hard letter to receive. But with him always it is the Cause first. Distressed as he is by his own perplexities and troubled for his wife and family, he is even more deeply anxious for the condition of the mission fields, and hardly pressed by the burden of work laid upon him. Under date May 26th, he writes to his wife :

"I must cut short my letters to you for a time. You must be content with a note instead of a letter. In my last I told you I had to take charge of Professor Bryce's classes in Ladies' School and College when he was away. To-day, in answer to a telegram from Toronto, Professor Hart went away, and I am to take charge of his classes as well. To do the work of these two men as best I can, and to do my own duties as minister of Knox Church, will require all my time. I am sorry the way things are, but cannot help it now. I am extremely sorry that both these men should be away now and that the field should be left desolate as well by the departure of Mr. Matheson for Canada to attend General Assembly. Messrs. McKellar and Currie are not expected to start from Toronto till the 1st of June—and things will be at sixes and sevens till they are here. There should be a man just now at Pembina when the Emerson colony is coming in. There has been no person in Palestine since the 1st of April, and no hope of one till the 1st of July. Rockwood, Victoria, Greenwood and Woodlands, four stations in a group, can only get supply once in a long time. Gris Isle cannot be opened up at all. The Boyne settlement can have no supply till July. Fraser is the only man between Burnside, Portage la Prairie, High Bluff, Portage Creek, Poplar Point, First Crossing and Totogan. No person, but such supply as we can give, for Pine Creek, Little Britain, Mapleton and three stations at Point du Chene and Headingly. I do not know what to do. I came here for rest, but never had so much work to look after in all my life.

"It is not known when Professor Bryce comes back, Matheson not till July 12th and Professor Hart in October. If the work is not better managed then we must lose a great deal here. This is the best time and yet we are without men to work."

The man is at his wits' end. These empty fields weigh heavy on his heart. He has made this work his own and its breakdown fills him with dismay. How those lists impress us! How characteristic of the man and how prophetic of the future! Undoubtedly for this kaleidoscopic Western mission work, for these rapidly growing and rapidly dividing mission fields, a man thus endowed with this marvellous faculty for details is sorely needed. But he carries these fields in his head, chiefly because he holds them in his heart.

Happily, the union negotiations came to a successful issue and at once the good effect was felt in the congregation. The Old Kirk party in Knox Church was thus set free to unite as, indeed, most of them had desired, in a call to their present minister. But for some weeks the tension for him is still great and the anxiety unabated. This, however, does not damp his impetuous missionary ardour. On the 19th of June he writes:

"Time is passing rapidly and I trust I shall be able to get home soon. Last Sabbath I went to Rockwood and Greenwood to preach, Mr. Vincent preaching in the city. Took a man out with me who came in from Ontario. Got out about nine o'clock and got a young man there ready to start in the morning and warn the people in the settlement of the service. Preached at eleven and had about twenty-five persons in all. Drove ten miles then over the prairie and came to Rockwood. Found only twelve grown-up people here. Preached, and made arrangements to preach two weeks from that day or send some one. There are four townships here, one behind the other, and we must try and have service in all of them during the summer. A good many settlers are going in there and they must be looked after. There is quite a settlement west of those places, too, and service must be begun there. Those young men, the missionaries from Canada, are not here yet and we are very much cramped in supply. We don't know what to do. Things are much neglected. There appears to be no system, no regular laid down scheme according to which to work, and hence but little is done. I feel more every day the need of doing well what is to be done here. There was a great mistake committed in allowing so many of the ministers to go away to Ontario, and another in not having Messrs. McKellar and Currie here two months ago. This is the time for us to work our mission field.

"Immigrants coming in rapidly and in great numbers, land being settled fast. Many are going outside province and soon the tide will go all to the West."

This is an impressive letter. How these imperative and oft reiterated "musts" smite on our hearts! Those four townships, who told him about them? "We must try and have service in all of them during the summer." "Incoming settlers must be looked after." In the settlements to the west "Service must be begun there." How the word hammers us! How the fire of his hot impatience burns against the neglect of these opportunities! Where other men might regret and deplore and do nothing, Robertson burns with indignant resolve that these things shall not continue. That is a noble sentence of his, "I feel more every day the need of doing well what is to be done here." It is the man's conscience, his prescience of the future, his love of his country and his zeal for his cause that, working together, produce this feeling of anxiety and this determination that things must be thoroughly done.

Five days after that visit to Rockwood, on the 24th of June, Dr. Black moderated in a call in Knox Church. There was but one name before the people, and without a dissenting voice a call was made out in favour of the Rev. James Robertson of Norwich, Ontario. The Presbytery of Manitoba sustained the call, appointed Dr. Bryce and Rev. William Cochrane commissioners to prosecute it before the Presbytery of Paris. And so it came that with this in his hand, Robertson came back to his congregation and to his wife to settle the momentous question of his future; momentous not for himself and family alone, but, though he knew it not, for his Church and for Western Canada. The call, signed by forty-three members and forty-eight adherents and duly attested by the Moderator of the Presbytery of Manitoba, was presented on the 11th day of August, 1874, to the Presbytery of Paris. When the parties were called to the bar, there appeared for the congregation of Knox Church, Winnipeg, and the Presbytery of Manitoba, the Rev. William Cochrane, for the congregations of Norwich and Windham, Messrs. Barr, Donald, Dean and others, and the Rev. James Robertson for himself.

The last month had been for him and for his wife one of anxious, earnest, prayerful deliberation. But even up to the day of Presbytery meeting, he was still uncertain as to his duty. After the commissioners had supported their respective causes, he was called upon for his answer, whereupon stating his great difficulties in coming to a right decision, he cast himself upon the judgment of the

Presbytery to translate or not as they saw fit. The parties having been removed, the Presbytery proceeded to give judgment, whereupon it was moved by Mr. McTavish, seconded by Mr. McMullen and unanimously agreed, "That the translation sought for be granted and the pastoral tie between Mr. Robertson and the congregations of Norwich and Windham be dissolved with a view to his induction to the charge of Knox Church, Winnipeg, such dissolution of pastoral tie to take place on and after the first Sabbath of September, and that Mr. Robertson be, as he is hereby, instructed to hold himself in readiness to obey the orders of the Manitoba Presbytery after that date."

And, indeed, nothing else could have been done, for when Robertson had told his Presbytery of Paris the story of his six months and a half experience in the far West, he had practically predetermined the action of Presbytery in regard to the call from Winnipeg. The Presbytery, listening to his recital, had become possessed of the conviction that the Church was summoned to vast and important work in that new and wonderful land, and of another conviction as well, that for the strategic position of minister of Knox Church, Robertson was the man. And though Robertson himself might fear that he " was not strong enough," none of his co-presbyters shared his fear, but rather felt sure that there was no man among them so fit for this position of leadership, and hence their minute. And so with a sharp wrench, the pain of which remained for many days and even for years, Robertson was translated from the little country congregations of Norwich and Windham in peaceful Ontario, to Knox Church, the leading congregation of Winnipeg, the bustling, hustling metropolitan city of the West.

XVII

THE PASTOR OF KNOX CHURCH, WINNIPEG

WHILE Presbytery was discussing the Winnipeg call, a little woman was waiting the issue in the Norwich manse, anxious and praying for —she hardly knew what. For though she had read in her husband's heart solicitude for the future of the Western country which he had already grown to love, and longing as yet unacknowledged even to himself to have a hand in its making, and though in her heart of hearts she knew there could be only one result of the deliberations in progress, still she waited, anxious and hoping that somehow it might be that their present quiet and happy life might remain undisturbed. And so it was with a sinking of heart that she received her husband's report that by a decision of Presbytery they were under orders for the West. She realized fully all that was involved, the breaking of those bonds that had bound her to the people among whom they had made their home for the past six years, the leaving behind of her own folk, the facing of the new land and all its unknown terrors, the uncertainty of the life before them, the isolation, the heart-sickening loneliness, all this she had already gone over till she knew it like a well-conned lesson. But this day for the first time what had been an anxiety and a fear, became a reality which must be faced at once. And face it she did, however her heart might sink, without a word of murmur or regret. The new land and the new life were to her unknown, but she knew her husband and could trust his judgment. There would be hardship and loneliness, but these she was ready to share with him. Besides, he had heard the call, and to that call he must give heed, and she was not the one to bid him pause. Nor did he pause. Leaving his family behind him in the meantime at Norwich, he proceeded westward in the second week of October, 1874.

His journey was uneventful. His route lay through the United States by Duluth, thence by train to Glyndon, and thence to Crookston, where he hoped to find the boat for Winnipeg. To his chagrin he found the boat gone, and Crookston full of impatient passengers, among them the Bishop of Saskatchewan with his whole family who had been there for five days unable to get passage. What was he to do? He was due in Winnipeg for his induction on Tuesday of the following week. The next boat would not arrive in Winnipeg till Thursday. Should he wait patiently, or impatiently, with the worthy Bishop and then take a pleasantly tedious boat trip down the sinuosities of the Red River? No such programme would suit this impetuous traveller. He writes his wife:

"Found the boat gone. The next would not get down till Thursday night and unless I came by stage I could not arrive at all for induction. So got away from Crookston on Sabbath evening. The roads were good and we made good time. Arrived in Winnipeg on Tuesday morning about four o'clock. They had all been despairing of my being here on time, except a few brave souls who maintained that such was not the character of the man. Got nicely rested before induction came on. Presbytery met in the afternoon at two o'clock and I attended."

Very different was the welcome waiting him this time from that which met him at his first coming to Winnipeg. Then, without a word of greeting, he made his way to his uncomfortable hotel, chilled to the bone with his long drive through the fierce January frosts and depressed with loneliness and homesickness. Now he is welcomed by hosts of friends and by a united and enthusiastic congregation. As that day he looked upon Winnipeg, the impression made upon him by the straggling city never left him. Many years afterwards, recalling his feelings, he writes:

"I stood at Fort Garry gate and looked over the black trail with its clustering variegation of shops and shacks that marked the main street of the capital. From that day, my hope for the West has never faded, nor have I ceased to be grateful for its rich opportunities for service."

His congregation and, indeed, the whole city were waiting him. His letter to his wife goes on:

"The meeting at the induction was quite a large one—the church was full. It was also a good representation of all parties in the Church. There were quite a number of strangers—people belonging to our own Church who had come here during my absence. They appeared to be all hearty and pleased. The Kirk people, too, I think, will work well. I want to pursue the policy of forgetfulness of the past, and active effort for the cause of Presbyterianism and Christianity for the future."

He came at a time when he was badly needed. The congregation had become somewhat disorganized during the interregnum, and there was much sickness, for the city was full of the typhoid fever that for many years continued to haunt the banks of the Red River. In addition, immigrants were arriving in large numbers, some distributing themselves in shacks and tents upon the prairie on the outskirts of the city, others pushing on to seek the better country that to them seemed to lie nearer the setting sun. By "the Dawson route" and by steamer they came, many of them poor, some of them sick, all lonely, all needing help, comfort and cheer. Robertson took hold of the situation with a firm grasp. First he proceeded to organize his force of workers.

"Things here are quiet," he writes to his wife under date October 30th. "There is still a good deal of sickness with fever, but there are very few deaths. The weather has turned cold now, and I think we shall have no new cases. I have done a good deal of visiting, but there is a great deal yet to be done. I am falling in with new people every day, and no person seems to have any idea of where our people are. Things are not in a good state generally, but they may take a better turn soon now. There is much work to be done and single-handed I cannot overtake it all. The Sabbath-school has been low owing to sickness and no one being here to take an interest in it. Next week we have a meeting of teachers and expect to do something to set matters right. Prayer-meeting and all have suffered, but we hope to make things better there too."

And again a week later he writes:

"Am very busy visiting, etc., here just now. Had a meeting of Session last night and tried to get things in order. We did a good deal of business and found members willing to aid as much as possible. We agreed to have regular meetings once every month and oftener if necessary. We agreed to get some men in the respective districts into which the city is divided to aid the elders in keeping trace of those coming in and going out. Session are going to visit themselves as much and as faithfully as possible. Measures are to be adopted to see strangers to seats and to welcome those who come to our services, and we are also to arrange about advertising services in papers and posting notices in boarding-houses and hotels. We have adopted measures to have a society for the relief of the poor, too, and I expect we shall get some aid in attending to cases of real want. Things are beginning to be organized, and before long we shall be on our way. We must vigorously push and do what we can, for unless this is done we must suffer. I meet with people who have never been in our church yet although here all summer. I am coming in contact with people and finding out Presbyterians of whose existence Session and congregation were ignorant. Such things must not be if it can be prevented."

Again that imperative "must" makes itself felt. The Session and congregation gather about him loyally. The leaders of the Old Kirk party, won over by his courtesy, his preaching power and his administrative ability, attach themselves to him. Dr. Clark retires from the city and after a short experience of mission work, retires from the Presbyterian Church into the Anglican fold where we lose sight of him forthwith. There was no place now for party feeling or division. The pressing necessities of their work forced minister and people to united and earnest coöperation. Never a boat or stage arrived but the minister of Knox Church was there to seek out and welcome first the Presbyterians and then any others that may need him. Dr. Young, the veteran missionary of the Methodist Church, once remarked in those times, "There is no use of my going to meet incoming travellers. Robertson is always there and they are all Presbyterians anyway." Not all Presbyterians, but certainly a very large proportion of them, and it was characteristic of Robertson that he frankly accepted responsibility for these from the moment of their arrival in a new country, and to these he gave himself without stint of time or energy or means.

Immediately the congregation begins to grow in strength and in unity. As the winter approaches, the problem of increased accommodation looms up.

"Church affairs quiet," he writes. "Our attendance is good, especially at night. Measures must be adopted about a new church during this winter. The question of our site is not settled and hence nothing can be done. The Hudson's Bay Company want to give us a lot in another place. This we are unwilling to take, for the present site is central. More room, however, we must have. Book racks are put in all pews and we are to have psalm-books also. They are sent for."

Thus his first winter passes, his days filled with varied work that taxed even his great physical powers to the utmost and left him often spent of strength and greatly needing the care and comfort of his home and family.

About the end of the first year of his pastorate, his wife and children arrived in Winnipeg. That was a great day for them all. Its incidents never faded from his wife's mind during the twenty-five years that followed. It was in early September. The boat came late at night to the wharf that lay imbedded in the muddy bank of the Red River. It was black and rainy when Mrs. Robertson, standing on the deck piled high with baggage and freight and crowded with passengers, her two children beside her and her baby in her arms, saw by the dim light of the wharf her husband's tall form under an umbrella held high. The baby was crying, and to the father's disappointment, refused utterly to go to him. So up the long flight of steps, slippery as only Red River mud can make things slippery, they toiled, and through the muddy streets to the hotel for the night. It was a dismal enough introduction to the new country for the wife, but next morning the sun was shining brightly over this wonderful Western town. Her husband's friends and her own came about her, offering hospitality of heart and home, and soon Mrs. Robertson found herself happy and content, busy to the full with her own and more with her husband's work, to his infinite comfort and peace.

During these years Winnipeg was full of young men. By scores and by hundreds they poured in, the most adventurous, the most enterprising, the most ambitious of the peoples from which they came. To win and hold these men, Mr. Robertson organized a Bible class that became one of the most striking features of the congregational life and work. His method of teaching stimulated thought and provoked discussion. Those were vigorous days, and the young men and young women who attended the class were intellectually alert and keen, so that many a day the hour passed unnoticed, and long before the discussion was done the time for closing had come. In this way and by regular social gatherings of the class at his own house, where he was as young as the youngest of them, the minister grew into the affection and confidence of the younger portion of his congregation.

The story of the Knox pastorate during those seven years, from 1874 to 1881, so remarkable in Winnipeg's history, deserves separate telling, so rich is it in striking incident and so vivid with the shifting colours of that kaleidoscopic period. But here it can have no larger space. As pastor, Mr. Robertson was indefatigable in his toil, unstinted in his sympathy, unfailing in resource. Old timers in Winnipeg are full of stories that illustrate his tact, sympathy, humour. Here is one.

An old Scotch lady lay dying. The minister visiting her could elicit from her mind, dulled by approaching death, no response. Falling back upon his long unused Gaelic, he repeated a Psalm and offered prayer in that ancient tongue. The effect was immediate and magical. The eye lighted up, the spirit came back again for a few brief moments, recalled by the sound of the mother tongue of her childhood days.

A friend of those early days tells of another incident illustrative of the courage and endurance of her minister :

"His pastoral duties often called him to take long drives into the surrounding country. These drives in winter time were always attended with hardship, sometimes with danger. Once during the winter of 1877 he went to Stony Mountain to perform a marriage ceremony. On his return a storm came up with startling suddenness. The sun was shining brightly and there was no appearance of a storm, when Mr. Robertson noticed a great white cloud like snow rolling along near the ground, while the sky still remained clear. In another instant the storm was upon him, a blizzard so blinding that the horse stopped, turned round, and left the trail. With a great deal of difficulty he got the horse back to the road, unhitched it from the cutter, took off the harness, and let it go, then set off himself to fight his way through the storm. A short distance from Kildonan he overtook a man driving a load of wood who had lost his way, and who was almost insensible from cold and fatigue. He turned the horses loose and took the man with him to a house in Kildonan. After half an hour's rest he set off again for Winnipeg, for he had left his wife sick in bed and he well knew she would be in terror for him. So once more he faced the blizzard, and, after two hours' struggle, he reached his home."

During the seven years of his pastorate the congregation continued to grow, not only in numerical and financial strength, but in spiritual life and in missionary zeal. The congregational report at the end of the first year of his pastorate showed 100 families, 100 communicants, three elders, a small Sabbath-school and Bible Class, with insignificant contributions to the Mission funds of the Church. At the end of the second year, 1876, the figures stood : families 135, communicants 177, elders 9, Sabbath-school 120, Bible Class 45. In 1878, the statistics showed a still greater advance: families 185, communicants 235, Sabbath-school and Bible Class 250, and in addition to paying a stipend of $2000.00, the congregation contributed $160.00 to Home Missions, $75.00 to French Evangelization, and $400.00 to benevolent purposes. The last year of Mr. Robertson's pastorate the annual report recorded 265 families, with an additional 125 single persons, 411 communicants, Sabbath-school and Bible Class 350, contributions to Home Missions $280.00, to schemes of the Church $532.00, to benevolence $483.00, a total for all purposes of $9,359.00, no insignificant sum for such a congregation.

With his business men he was simple, direct and manly in his methods. His managers consulted him regularly and his advice came to be trusted and followed. He despised the circuitous and ethically doubtful methods employed too often for the raising of money for church purposes. "Don't charge for your social," he said once to his Ladies' Aid; "when we want money, I'll ask the people for it straight." And ask the people he did, and with such good effect did he practice this habit, that when the large undertaking of building a new church was upon them, he went to his men and in a single week raised twelve thousand dollars of the twenty-six thousand needed. That church building was at once a triumph of architectural skill and test of congregational loyalty and of ministerial genius in finance.

There is no doubt that it was during his pastorate in Knox Church, that Mr. Robertson received that training in business method and financial management that proved so valuable to him in his later career. And certain it is, too, that if Knox Church owed much to his leadership and his organizing genius, he owed much to

Knox Church and to the able and vigorous men with whom he was brought into contact day by day in his administration of the congregation's affairs in those stirring and strenuous times.

XVIII

HIS WIDER MINISTRY

WINNIPEG in those days was the Mecca of the fortune seeking and the land hungry from the older portions of the Empire and from other countries as well. For all Scotch folk, and for all folk of Presbyterian extraction, connection or leaning, the Presbyterian minister was the natural resort for all in need of advice, of guidance, of cheer, of aid financial and other, and the minister's home became a kind of Immigration Office, a General Information Bureau, an Employment Agency, an Institution for Universal Aid. This meant to the minister that his time and strength, and often his money, were at the command of all who came to his door. To his wife it meant a good deal more. For not only did they keep open house, but an open table as well. This necessitated a larder continually stocked, a kitchen never anything but busy. This was hard enough upon the mistress of the house, with her young family about her, and her congregational duties demanding her time, strength and thought; but for all ordinary exigencies Mrs. Robertson was always ready. But when at the dinner hour her husband calmly ushered in some half dozen or dozen hungry folk, if her nerve failed her for the moment, what wonder? There was, however, no breakdown of the spirit of hospitality, and no failure upon the part of either minister or minister's wife to show kindness to the stranger. By the minister this was accepted as a part of his regular duty, and as affording a valuable opportunity of service. By the minister's wife, as part of the burden, not to say cross, laid on her as her husband's wife.

But through all the years of the Knox Church pastorate no immigrant called on Mr. Robertson in vain for aid, and none was turned away from that hospitable door. Many years afterwards one of these immigrants, remembering gratefully his kindness to the stranger, thus writes:

"On my arrival in Winnipeg twenty-four years ago, at that time a town of five thousand people, I called on Mr. Robertson who was then pastor of Knox Church. He came with me at once and guided me to a desirable hotel where our family of seven persons could be accommodated. Besides, he spent a forenoon in aiding me to get my effects through the Customs, a thing that a stranger could not do.

"Nearly every day he was called on by some strangers from the Old Land and from our Eastern Provinces with many questions to ask, and he patiently heard them and intelligently answered them. He knew more of the Prairie province than most men, and newcomers were always befriended by him. Knox Church was then a large congregation, and rapidly becoming larger, and demanded much of his time. But with all the pressure upon his time, he never complained of being overburdened in seeing to the wants of newcomers from other lands.

"I know of some instances of men who, when they came to our Province, were short of funds. Though Mr. Robertson had no money to spare, they came to him in their distress and he handed them what money they wanted. And I have the best of reasons to believe that these borrowings were never repaid."

Patience of spirit was by no means a striking characteristic of Mr. Robertson in those eager, busy years. But for the stranger, lonely, poor, heart-sick, his patience never failed. Often imposed upon, he never sent men away without an attempt, at least, to meet their wants. They came to him for meals and lodgings, and he took them in. They came seeking work and he tramped the street with them. They came selling extraordinarily unuseful articles and he purchased of them all. His wife remembers one unhappy agent selling coat hangers from whom the minister bought half a dozen, though at the time he had only a single coat needing a hanger. Another day a gentleman too proud to beg and too honest to borrow, offers for sale a pair of high riding boots. The minister buys them for $6.00, though he knows they are sizes too small. He is gaining experience and other things besides, for which he is paying dear, but ever without a grudge. The time will come when in settlements far away he will meet those who will think it joy to serve him and for his sake the cause he loves.

After many years had passed, a friend of his came upon one of those who counted it honour to do him service. This friend writes :

"I drove up to a comfortable looking homestead. The house was built of logs, not grand, but comfortable. The barn, however, was truly magnificent and thoroughly equipped with the most up-to-date appliances for scientific stock-raising. I had never seen anything like it even among the wealthy farmers in Ontario. The stables were full of horses and in the fields far away a large herd of cattle could be seen. It was evidently a farm of great prosperity, and indicated growing wealth.

"In the house I found an old Scotch lady and her two sons, fine young fellows. I mentioned the name of Dr. Robertson and at once the shrewd old face took on a different look. It seemed to fill up with kindness, and she began to talk. She had a remarkable story to tell.

Twenty-one years before, she, with her husband and two baby boys, had come to Winnipeg. They had not much money, and all they had they invested in an ox-team, waggon and general outfit. They spent a Sunday at the immigration sheds in Winnipeg. The Presbyterian minister came down to preach to the immigrants in the afternoon. The place was uncomfortable and crowded. Her baby was fretful, and so the mother sat outside the door; it was a warm spring day, and there she listened to the sermon. She could not see the preacher's face, but she gave me a good bit of that sermon. The theme was Abraham and his northwest adventure, and the parallel was drawn between him and these people who were about to seek their fortune in the West. The two main thoughts that the old lady carried with her for these twenty years were these: 'God is going with you. Do not be discouraged. Never give up hope,' and 'You are going to make a new country, build your foundations for God.' She remembered the grip of the minister's hand as next day he went with them far out on to the prairie to set them on their westward journey, and how standing there he bade them a cheery farewell and watched them almost out of sight. His words of cheer stood them in good stead on that journey. As they neared the Portage plains they found the prairie one great wide expanse of black mud and water through which laden teams were frantically struggling, trying to get through. Again and again the husband was forced to unload his stuff, the mother holding her two babies in the waggon, till at last in despair he was for turning back. But the wife would not hear of it. The words of the preacher rang in her heart, 'Never fear. God is with you. Don't turn back.' And they did not.

"They reached their location and began to farm. Within two years her husband died and the mother with her two little boys were left alone. But the neighbours were kind. She could get plenty of work to do. She did the washing for the bachelors round about, and baked bread for the villagers. She had no one with whom she could leave the children, but back and forward she went with her washing and her bread, leading one child by the hand and carrying the other upon her back, going barefoot through the water of the slough to save her boots.

"Her people in Scotland were anxious to have her return home, but she would not. She believed that God was with her and that she should not turn back. To-day, with a section and a half of the best land that the sun shines on, with barn and stables, cattle and horses, she has proved again that God keeps His promises. And often through these years by her devotion to the cause he represented, has she shown her gratitude to the minister who preached to her in Winnipeg that day and whose words upheld her for many a day afterwards."

But many are the stories that could be told of the wider ministry of the pastor of Knox Church of that day in behalf of those needy immigrants, and many of these same immigrants, now prosperous merchants or wealthy farmers, remember with grateful hearts and hearty greeting, the sympathetic hearing, that firm, strong, downward grip of the hand of the Presbyterian minister of Winnipeg to whom they appealed for help when help was needed, and never vainly.

XIX

FROM PASTOR TO SUPERINTENDENT

THESE seven years were years of extraordinary growth in the country and in the city and, consequently, in the mission and college work of the Church. This remarkable development is clearly reflected in the annual reports of Manitoba College and of the Manitoba Presbytery's Home Mission Committee, and in the reports of the College and of the Home Mission Committee of which he was Convener, the hand of Robertson is very clearly seen, as is his influence apparent in the directing and prosecuting of both these departments of Western work.

At the first General Assembly of the United Church in 1875, a reference from the last Assembly of the Canada Presbyterian Church was brought forward by Mr. Robertson, asking permission to raise thirty-five hundred dollars for the College. This permission was granted and the money raised, with the result that in the following year the College was reported to be in good condition. At that General Assembly it was decreed that henceforth Manitoba College must stand upon its own feet and must no longer be a charge upon the Home Mission fund. The professors were reported as giving, with the two settled pastors, very efficient service in the exploratory and other Home Mission work of the Church. As we read the record of the lives of these men we are amazed at the extent and variety of their labours. No man is allowed to devote himself exclusively to his own special department. Every professor is a home missionary taking his full share of the toil and dangers inseparable from the work. Similarly, Robertson, besides his congregational duties and that wider ministry in behalf of the incoming settlers, began, in the year 1877, a course of lectures in Manitoba College which he continued for a number of years. In this year, too, he was made a member of the College board, and took his full share in the administration of College affairs. He also took an important part in the founding of the University of Manitoba and in bringing about the affiliation of the College with that institution. This proved to be a great uplift to Manitoba College, and at once the Presbyterian constituency in the West began to take a new pride in their College and to plan for its expansion. But the same year saw the terrible grasshopper plague which swept the country bare, and so reduced the revenue that it became necessary for the College to report a serious financial deficit. At once there rose a cry for retrenchment, but to this Mr. Robertson would not listen, and set about a vigorous campaign for further expansion which, however, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, was only partially successful.

But though the College made heavy demands upon him, and though he gave himself with all diligence to his multifarious congregational and other duties as minister of Knox Church, it was the Home Mission work that, more than any other, pressed hardest upon him during these years. It was characteristic of him that at his first Presbytery meeting, before he himself was inducted, he was found earnestly advocating a plan for the maintaining of work in the Prince Albert district, vacated by the death of Mr. Nisbet.

"When I wrote you last, I was talking of going to Portage la Prairie to help to license and ordain Mr.

McKellar to send him away to Prince Albert mission. As you will recollect, Mr. Nisbet, who was our first missionary to that district, died a short time ago. His wife was taken ill and he came down here with her. The five hundred mile journey was too much for her and she died. He was reduced very much owing to the fatigue incident to the journey, and through care and anxiety in reference to his wife. Her death was too great a blow for him and he followed her in about two weeks. The mission in the West was thus left without a pastor. The Presbytery of Manitoba tried to get Mr. Donaldson sent, but the Foreign Mission Committee objected. Things thus indicated that the mission was to be without any supply during winter. On my way here I heard that Dr. M—— was going west, and to make Prince Albert his headquarters for the winter. He is a dangerous man, and were he among these simple-minded people for a winter doing all he could to wean them away, I feared for the future of our mission." Needless to say, Dr. M—— was not a Presbyterian. "At the meeting of Presbytery I proposed to license and ordain Mr. McKellar if he would accept a call from our Presbytery. Professor Bryce was instructed to communicate with him, the Presbytery falling in with the suggestion made. The Presbytery agreed to adjourn to meet in Portage la Prairie. Mr. McKellar accepted and we went west and all things were arranged. We got all necessary outfit for him at the Portage, and he holds himself in readiness to go west at once. There is a Mr. McDonald down here just now from Fort Ellice, and I have made arrangements with him to take him west with him and to put him on the other two hundred and fifty miles as soon as possible. Dr. M—— would go too with Mr. McDonald, but he would not take him. I expect he will get west some way, but McKellar will be before him and can counteract anything he may try to do there. I am not sure how the Foreign Mission Committee will take the matter, but cannot help it unless we were willing to endanger the existence of our mission. We can, I think, justify our course.''.

Without a doubt he can justify his course in this instance and in many others to follow. Mr. Robertson is keenly zealous for his Church. He heartily believes in it as a democratic institution eminently suited to the needs of a new country and holding a creed which, entering into the thought and feeling of a people, will do much to establish it in righteousness. Hence, while being fair and honourable with other denominations, he gives himself heart and soul to the extension and consolidation of his own. And once having planted ''the blue banner'' in any position of importance, he will not see it lowered without a fight. He is out and out, and very frankly, a Presbyterian, and by all honourable means he will maintain the Presbyterian cause where he can. In a letter to his wife he writes:

''I think I told you in my last letter that Mr. Currie was to go west to Palestine. He has gone and is to remain there all winter. Last week Mr. Black of Kildonan and myself were at Headingly consulting about building another church and changing the site. Matters progressed a good deal, and we expect to go up another day and finish. I find that things of that kind are left to myself when sent out. Mr. Black did nothing but sit and listen.'' Well he has earned the right to sit and listen. Let the younger brother do battle. ''We had three hundred dollars subscribed on the spot and a grant of an acre for a new church. We appointed two arbitrators to decide how much the old site and the church are worth, and the man on whose land it is promises to take it off our hands at that figure. Am going to suggest that they have a Tea Meeting which may get one hundred dollars for them without much trouble."

The habit is growing on Presbytery unobserved, as is the case with all habits, of laying upon the minister of Knox Church the burden of Home Mission work, not because he has any less to do than others, nor simply because he is the minister of the leading congregation in the West, and not solely because he is the Convener of the Home Mission Committee, but because he is rapidly developing a genius for administration, a capacity for swift, concentrated action, and, more than all, he has burning in his heart a kind of passion of responsibility for the incoming settlers belonging to his own Church and for the future of the country they are helping to build.

About this time we catch the first notes, low and still distant, of those contending cries on the one hand of appeal from the vigorous and growing child in the West and, on the other, of warning protest from the nurturing mother in the East. It was in this year, too, that Robertson began his long series of railroad missions. In one of his missionary journeys a hundred miles east of Winnipeg, he discovered a thousand men working within twenty miles of the line, with no opportunity for religious privileges of any kind. He held a meeting with them; got promises from the men for seventy dollars a month for the support of a missionary, board and lodging promised by the contractor, and thus established his first railway mission. This mission in the year following contributed nine hundred dollars towards the work, and called for a second man.

The Home Mission operations of 1878, as reported to the Assembly, were shown to extend from Rat Portage for seven hundred and fifty miles west, and from the boundary line to Battleford, two hundred and seventy-five miles north. Over this territory forty-four mission fields have been carried on and many more were reported as waiting to be opened up, the liberality of the settlers being abundantly attested by their voluntarily contributing out of their scanty means almost ten thousand dollars.

And now with each succeeding report from the Presbytery of Manitoba, we begin to get visions of new fields ever opening up on the horizon of unclaimed territory far beyond where, Mr. Robertson addressing the Church, says, "your children are making for themselves homes and are in danger of being neglected and forgotten." We begin to hear now those tales of heroic endurance on the part of the prairie missionary with which in later days we are to become so familiar; of his long journeys from five to fifty miles on a Sabbath day, of his facing the perils of frosts and blizzards and of his cheerful courage through it all.

When the Home Mission report for the Manitoba Presbytery for 1880 was presented, the General Assembly for the first time seemed to become aware of what had been happening during the past ten years. The Presbytery's western limit of the previous year had been pushed back some three hundred and fifty miles by the demand of far-off Edmonton for a missionary. In the report for this year occur the noble words breathing high statesmanship and high devotion: "Presbytery realizes that the first missionary who appears in any field obtains most important hold. Presbytery regards it as wise and most honouring to Christ, that so soon as any considerable number of people are settled together, the pioneer Presbyterian missionary should visit them and collect the people at central points for prayer and praise in the open, or in a log dwelling of some godly settler. As soon as any region is fairly settled the Presbytery aims to send a resident missionary. The missionary on an average can overtake fifty or sixty families scattered among four or five stations.''

The Assembly awakens to the fact that the work in the West must henceforth be taken very seriously. The Manitoba Presbytery this year spends nine thousand four hundred dollars in their Home Mission field, and still the call is for more men and more money. The following year, 1881, the crisis is reached. It is a year of great material progress throughout the whole West. The Presbytery has increased its staff of workers by fourteen, employing in all twenty-one ordained missionaries and fifteen catechists. A thousand miles beyond Winnipeg the field has been occupied, but on every side, from southern Manitoba, from the west and from the northwest, still rises the cry for workers. To the Presbytery the situation appears desperate. Never in the history of the Church has a Presbytery been entrusted with so vast a field, and with such enormous responsibilities. With everything that they have been able to achieve in the way of supplying settlements, the Presbytery is painfully conscious of much work lying undone and many districts lying neglected. Professors, pastors, missionaries and catechists are all working to the limit of their powers, and yet whole sections of the country are unorganized and unexplored. The Presbytery determines upon a bold step. The extraordinary need must be met by extraordinary means. After much deliberation an overture is prepared and sent forward to General Assembly, praying for the appointment of a Superintendent of Missions over the field occupied by the Presbytery. Anent the overture, the veteran pioneer missionary from the West, Dr. Black, is invited to address the Assembly. In a speech of remarkable force, lacking though he is in physical vigour, Dr. Black supports the overture.

The prayer is granted. A committee consisting of Dr.

Waters, Convener, Dr. Cochrane, Messrs. Pitblado, King, Macdonnell, Black, Warden, ministers, and Messrs. Laurie, Vidal, McMicken, Munns, elders, was appointed. The committee recommend that James Robertson, presently pastor of Knox Church, Winnipeg, be appointed Superintendent of Missions in the Northwest, his salary to be two thousand dollars, this to cover all expenses while he may be labouring in Manitoba or the immediate neighbourhood. Journeys to distant points such as Edmonton to be paid by the Assembly's Home Mission Committee.

The appointment of Assembly is telegraphed to Mr. Robertson where, toiling at his work alone, for his wife and family are in the East, he finds himself summoned to make one of the most momentous decisions of his life.

XX

FAREWELL TO THE PASTORATE

WITH the Assembly's telegram in his hand, Mr. Robertson summons his Session, and together they deliberate upon this most momentous call. The Session had been more or less prepared for some such action of Assembly. Long before he was appointed Superintendent their pastor had been superintending. They knew well enough that though the Presbytery's overture made no nomination for the office, there was only one man to whom the West would intrust their missions, and only one man fit for the work. Impressed as they are with the necessities of Knox Church, Winnipeg, the greater necessities of the vast mission field of the West impressed them more deeply. The Church had called their minister to a larger and more important sphere of labour. With affection and regret, therefore, but without hesitation, they advised his acceptance of the appointment. He wired the Assembly his decision. He will accept the appointment, but stipulates that his salary be that of Manitoba College professors, with all travelling expenses added. In a letter to his wife who, with the family, had gone on a visit to her home in Eastern Canada, he describes his line of action and discusses a little the future. It is dated from the Manse, Winnipeg, June 16, 1881:

"MY DEAR WIFE: —

"Your letter bearing intelligence of your safe arrival at home I just received. The notes of the children from

St. Paul I also received. From Chicago I heard through Mrs. Hart. I was glad to find that you all got down there so well, and hope the stay there may do you all good. I am inclined to think that it will be protracted beyond our first anticipations. As you will have learned ere this reaches you, I have been appointed Superintendent of Missions in Manitoba and the Northwest by the unanimous vote of the Assembly. I have accepted the appointment. Would like to have communicated with you ere taking the final step, but the Assembly's call was urgent and there was no time to write. I called the Session together on receipt of telegram and consulted with them. They regarded the offer as a step in advance and would not oppose the wish of the Assembly, thinking it useless. They regarded me as the most fit man for the position, the most fit, they thought, in the Church. They considered the office necessary in the interests of the Church, and telegraphed to this effect to the Assembly. The salary offered was two thousand dollars and I was to pay my own travelling expenses. After maturely considering the question, I telegraphed 'Accept call of Assembly, but cannot live here respectably on conditions stated. Make salary equivalent to that of professors of Manitoba College and travelling expenses.' To this Cochrane replied at once, 'You are appointed on condition stated and will enter on work in July.' He is coming out here to induct or help induct. I will arrange as soon as convenient for going over all the fields, returning here in the fall, after which I will likely go east to spend the winter. . . . I regret much that I shall be away from home a great deal. This cannot be helped." How little either of them guessed how pathetically prophetic of their future experience were these words! The future is to them quite unknown. They had made arrangements for the building of a house and the establishing of a home in Winnipeg. "What now about building?" he writes. "Am I to go on at once and build, or to postpone till next year? The money for the house has been paid and I can proceed, but if you are to stay down all summer and I am to go down in the fall, it would seem as if we had better postpone building till next year. You could get a house in Woodstock and the children could go to school there. But when you write you could let me know what you think of the new situation. As you see, I am yet in the manse. They are in no hurry fixing it up. I make my own bed and clean my own boots and fix up my own room, and board at the Queen's. Time will decide my future."

The parting from Knox Church was not without pain to minister and people. The congregation were losing their first minister and he had made them what they were. The minister was severing the bond that had been strong enough to draw him to this new land and had grown stronger during the seven years of his labour in it. But to both people and minister the feeling that the Church had called him to a wider sphere and to higher work, made acquiescence easier. To the congregation the loss of their pastor at that particular period in their history was a serious blow. The line of cleavage between the two elements in the congregation was still pretty clearly defined. Indeed, many feared that once the strong unifying personality of the minister was removed, disintegration would ensue. Happily these fears were groundless, though to a certain extent they were shared by the minister himself. Writing to his wife soon after his appointment he says:

"There are elements in the congregation that are difficult to manage. They may now divide according to their predilections. The Knox Church part may try to get a Kirk minister, while the other will likely get an Old

Canada Presbyterian. In any case I fear that a division is inevitable and perhaps this will help the matter. I am sorry to part with a congregation which I was to so large a degree instrumental in building up."

The affection and the regret with which his people bade him farewell find expression in various addresses and presentations. The address from the Session was as follows:

"To the Rev. James Robertson:

"In taking leave of you on your entrance upon the responsible duties of Superintendent of Missions in Manitoba and the Northwest, we as a congregation desire to express our heartfelt appreciation of the services which, as our pastor, you have rendered us during the past seven years.

"When your pastorate began we were a mere handful, and worshipped in a small, plain structure. Under God you have been the means of building up a large congregation, and to your perseverance and energy was largely due the erection of our present beautiful place of worship. Your genuine piety, courteous manners, and deep solicitude for the welfare of all with whom you came in contact, have won you lasting gratitude. The afflicted and the stranger have always found you a true friend and wise counsellor. Many of your self-denying acts are known to your friends, but we are satisfied that very many are known only to yourself and to Him who seeth all things.

"In addition to the various duties of your pastorate, you have responded to the calls that came to you from time to time to take an active part in the educational interests of our country, in temperance, and in all matters pertaining to the general weal.

"We wish you Godspeed in your new and honourable sphere of labour, and 'Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.'

(Signed) "Thomas Hart, M. A., B. D.,
"Session Clerk."

Without a doubt the fineness of touch in the diction of this address and the warmth of affection breathing through its words, reveal the hand of that very fine Christian gentleman who was the minister's *fidus Achates*, Professor Hart. And few things in this period of Mr. Robertson's life are more beautiful than his affection for the man who, when he might have easily allowed himself to be prejudiced by his sense of loyalty to his own Kirk against him who represented another Church, received him instead with generous affection and stood by him with unshaken loyalty, then and through all the following years during which it was given these two to live and work together.

But nothing touched the minister more than the farewell of the ladies of the congregation. Loyally had they stood by him, and with unwearied fidelity had they toiled with him in the varied departments of work represented in the congregation. In those days the men were often so absorbed in the rush and crush of business that much of their work as members of the Church had been relegated too often to their wives and daughters. But nobly had they answered to the often unreasonable demands of the congregation, and without faltering they had followed the leadership of their pastor. Their devotion to him and their regret at his departure found expression in the following address, which was accompanied by a gift of $632.00:

"TO THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF MISSIONS FOR MANITOBA AND THE NORTHWEST:

"We, the ladies of Knox Church, Winnipeg, cannot allow the tie to be severed that has bound us, pastor and people, without expressing to you on behalf of the congregation our appreciation of your devoted services during the past seven years.

"The congregation at the beginning of your pastorate was small in number and very poorly provided for the work of advancing Christ's cause in the then unorganized community in which our lot was cast.

"We rejoice to acknowledge your services to the congregation in the very earnest assistance given by you in the erection of our church building, which has been a credit to the city and a factor in advancing our cause.

"We remember gratefully your attention to your duties at the three turning points of life—morning, noon, and night—when, in performing the initiatory ordinance of our Church, in uniting together kindred hearts, and in performing the last sad rites, you were always willing to lend your aid.

"We would thank you for the faithful instruction given from the sacred desk, for the instruction given to the young of the congregation, and the private advice so affectionately given to the disconsolate or the wayward.

"We regret at the present time the absence of your beloved partner in life, who has with such kindness and at great personal sacrifice, done her duties in a quiet and unobtrusive manner as pastor's wife.

"We congratulate you on the high honour paid you in the unanimous call given by the highest court of our Church, to the office which you now occupy. We feel it to be a matter of great importance to our cause at the present time, to have one so well fitted as yourself for the work of advancing the rapidly spreading principles which we profess, in the great Northwest, and knowing that an expensive outfit is necessary for your onerous work, we beg that you will accept, as conveyed by the gentlemen of the congregation through our hands, this purse of $632.

"We pray that God's blessing may still attend you; that you may be preserved safe in your abundant labours, and that you may have an 'inheritance among all them that are sanctified.'

(Signed) "JANE AGNEW,
"SAIDIE MCKILLIGAN,
"M. BRYCE."

In connection with the presentation of this purse an incident occurred that cut Robertson to the quick and aroused very considerable feeling at the time among the people. By two of the speakers on the occasion of the presentation, this gift was referred to as being intended for the purchase of an outfit for the new Superintendent. This interpretation was immediately and strongly repudiated by the ladies who had solicited the subscriptions in the following note sent soon after the meeting was held:

> "*Winnipeg, July 27, 1881.*
>
> "A difference of opinion having been expressed as to the object for which subscriptions were solicited for a purse to be presented to the Rev. Mr. Robertson, we beg to say that the money was obtained for Mr. Robertson's *personal* benefit *absolutely*.
>
> (Signed) "SAIDIE MCKILLIGAN,
> "JANE AGNES BEATRICE BATHGATE,
> "LIZZIE GERRIE,
> "MARGARET A. MCLEAN,
> "SARAH LAPP,
> "ELIZABETH A. LAIDLAW."

These ladies had no intention of making contribution to the Assembly's Home Mission Committee. Not they. Their gift was to their minister whom they loved, and they determined that there should be no uncertainty in the matter.

Mr. Robertson's farewell sermon was preached to a densely crowded congregation on the 24th of July, 1881. His text was Philippians 1 : 27 : "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."

It was a brief but comprehensive statement of the progress of the city, the country and the congregation during the seven years of his pastorate, and closed with an earnest appeal to the congregation to be worthy of their great opportunity to measure up to their responsibility as the premier congregation of this new country, and with a few words of affectionate farewell.

From the Ladies' Missionary and Charitable Associations there came the following address, which was accompanied by the gift of a valuable gold chain:

"TO THE REV. JAMES ROBERTSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF MISSIONS FOR MANITOBA AND THE NORTHWEST:

"We, the ladies representing the Missionary and Charitable Associations of Knox Church, Winnipeg, beg to present to you, on beginning the important duties to which you have been called in behalf of the missions of our Church, our warmest congratulations. We believe that the work of our Church for missions is but in its infancy; that we have not yet begun to realize the importance and urgency of our Saviour's command, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' We feel that at the threshold of the great Northwest especially, an important duty rests on us of sending the Gospel to our fellow countrymen who are settling on these wide prairies, and also to the wandering tribes who are crying at our doors.

"We regret that our efforts have resulted in raising so little means in the past, but we rejoice that in your appointment there has been recognized the importance of this great work, by calling one so useful as you are to this sphere.

"But while this is the case, we would not forget the past. We are glad to know that it is your intention still to reside in our midst. We pray for the speedy return to health and strength of your beloved partner in life, and your family.

"Be pleased to accept this chain in memory of past associations, and kindly regard it as a token of our desire that we may be still closely joined together in the mission work of the Church, and that you and yours may be bound up with us in the same bundle of life and may reach the same heavenly home.

(Signed) "JANE AGNEW,
"SAIDIE MCKILLIGAN,
"MARY A. SWINFORD,
"ELIZABETH A. LAIDLAW,
"MRS. LAPP,
"MRS. J. P. ROBERTSON,
"M. BRYCE.

"July 26th, 1881."

On July 22d the Manitoba Presbytery met at Portage la Prairie and made arrangements for the induction of Mr. Robertson into his new office. In severing the pastoral tie between the minister and congregation of Knox Church, Presbytery, in a formal resolution, took the opportunity of recording its high appreciation of the service rendered by Mr. Robertson not only to the congregation and the community, but to the whole Church in the West, and expressed the most earnest hopes for his success in his new work. For the most part there was enthusiastic approval of the appointment, though there were not wanting those who predicted difficulties, constitutional and other, in the working of the new office.

The induction of Mr. Robertson to his new position was deemed by the Presbyterian Church an event of sufficient importance to warrant the appointing of a special Commission for this purpose, consisting of the Rev. Dr. Cochrane, Convener of the Home Mission Committee, and the Rev. George Bruce of St. Catharines. Others took part in the interesting function, among them Professor Hart and Rev. A. Bell. The service was held on the evening of July 26th, in Knox Church, with Professor Bryce in the chair.

In the eloquent address of the Convener of the Home Mission Committee occurs this very significant sentence: "To Mr. Robertson is due largely the present standing of Presbyterianism in Winnipeg and the great Northwest." The Convener, at least, of the Committee that has had charge of this vast and growing work has had borne in upon him something of the magnitude of the toils endured and the service rendered to the Church and to the Western country by the minister of Knox Church during the seven years of his pastorate. It will be some years yet, however, before he will come to his own with the Church as a whole.

Thus, carrying with him the affection of his people to whom he has ministered for seven years, the gratitude of the Committee which he has served with such conspicuous success, the esteem and confidence of the Presbytery of which he has been for these years a guide and leader, the Superintendent enters upon his new sphere of labour, not without his fears and misgivings, but conscious of a high resolve to do his best to serve his country and his God as opportunity may be his.

XXI

GETTING INTO THE SADDLE

FOR ten years the fame of the Canadian West had been spreading abroad, not only throughout Eastern Canada, but across the sea to European countries as well. Year by year the volume of immigration had been growing steadily. In 1878, the railroad from the south reached St. Boniface. It was not until 1881, however, that it crossed the Red River and entered the capital city of Manitoba. With the advent of the railway to the Province, the growth of immigration was vastly increased. Settlers poured in, with money and without money, filled up the vacant spaces about the city, all demanding homes and building sites, and passed through and out of the city by the trails leading south, west and north, buying land, securing homesteads and squatting on claims. Colonization companies, land syndicates, railroads, were all smitten with the fever of land speculation. In consequence, prices rose enormously, till the climax was reached in the famous "boom" of 1881.

The stories that float down to us from the days of the Winnipeg "boom" read almost like fairy tales. It is difficult to believe that sane men could have become so rabidly mad in so short a period of time. Not only did the value of corner lots in the city of Winnipeg soar out of sight, but far out upon the prairie, in anticipation of projected and wholly imaginary railway lines, town sites were surveyed, then from alluring and beautiful pictures of prosperous towns built upon these sites, with post-office, railway station, court-house, beautifully treed avenues depicted in harmonious colours, lots were sold at fabulous prices. Not only in Winnipeg and the West, but in Eastern Canada and the United States, those building sites were greedily snapped up. The spirit of adventure seizing many who approached this land of promise, led them far off into wilds remote from civilization, from market, from means of transportation, from school and church privileges. The cry was "Ho! for the far West!" In every direction nuclei of settlements were set down upon the empty prairie.

All this made enormous demands upon the Church. From Port Arthur to British Columbia, two thousand miles and more, stretched this vast mission field. No wonder that the Home Mission Committee of 1880, after passing grants to the amount of nearly $11,000 to twenty-eight groups of mission fields in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, and with a debit balance of $14,500 should sit down and, without argument, pass the following resolution:

"The Committee having regard to the injunction of the General Assembly to keep the expenditure of the fund within the income, agree, as a measure of precaution, to make the grants to mission stations and supplemented congregations, as now revised, for the six months ending 31st March next; these grants for the following six months being subject to revision at the next general meeting of the Committee."

The terror of the West was upon the committee. They knew not whereunto this thing would grow. Reaching the limit of their own resources, they appeal, and not without result, to the Churches of the Homeland. But still they find themselves with means inadequate to the demands made upon them. So they pass resolutions urging retrenchment. But however the Committee may resolve, the West cannot and will not halt. It was the next year, 1881, that answering the far-off cry from Edmonton, A. B. Baird, newly graduated from Knox College, and newly ordained by the Presbytery of Stratford, hitched up his buckboard at Winnipeg, packed in his "grub" and outfit, and took the westward trail for his outpost nine hundred miles away.

With this vast mission field reaching from the Lakes to Edmonton, nearly fifteen hundred miles from east to west, and with the Home Mission Committee in such financial straits, it was that the Superintendent entered upon his work.

The institution or revival of the office of Superintendent was for all concerned a somewhat perilous departure. "What does this office mean?" many were asking. "What are its rights and its limitations? What of Presbytery authority and the authority of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, and of the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee? What of the sacred doctrine of the parity of Presbyters?" Surely this man will need to give heed to his steps that he slip not. To aid him in this the Home Mission Committee prepare a series of regulations for the guidance of the Superintendent for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. These are afterwards approved by the Presbytery of Manitoba and by the General Assembly, and are as follows:

1. His duties shall include the oversight and visitation of all the mission stations and supplemented congregations within the aforesaid territory; the organization of new stations and the adjusting of the amounts to be paid by the different stations and congregations for the support of ordinances, and the amounts to be asked from the Home Mission Committee, and in general the supervision and furtherance of the entire mission work of our Church in Manitoba and the Northwest.

2. In the prosecution of his work he shall consult and

report to the Presbytery of Manitoba or such other Presbyteries as may be hereinafter erected. He shall also submit to the meetings of the Home Mission Committee, in March and October, a detailed statement of the progress of the work, including the adaptability of the missionaries to the fields assigned to them, and the fulfillment on the part of stations and supplemented congregations of the engagements entered into for the support of the missionaries.

3. He shall transmit to the Home Mission Committee an annual report for presentation to the Assembly, containing complete statistics of the membership, families and adherents in each mission station and supplemented congregation ; also the additions made during the year, the amount of contributions for the support of ordinances and for the Home Mission fund during the year, and the extent of new territory occupied during the same period, with any other information and recommendations that may be deemed important for the Committee and the General Assembly to know.

4. All Home Mission grants shall be paid by the Superintendent to the stations and supplemented congregations, and he shall be empowered, should he see cause, to withhold payment of said grants in cases where the stations and supplemented congregations have not fulfilled their monetary engagements, or where statistics have not been regularly furnished.

5. Payments shall be made to the stations and supplemented congregations quarterly.

6. No draft shall in any case be drawn by the Superintendent of Missions until he has sent to the Convener of the Home Mission Committee a detailed quarterly statement of the amounts due to each station and congregation, and until he has received his sanction to draw for said amounts upon the treasurer of the Church.

7. In the meantime, the missionary of Prince Albert shall receive his payments directly through the Convener of the Home Mission Committee.

8. The Superintendent of Missions shall spend a portion of each year as directed by the Home Mission Committee in the other Provinces, with a view to enlist the sympathies and evoke the liberality of the Church in the mission work of Manitoba and the Northwest.

9. The Superintendent shall report his travelling expenses every six months to the Presbytery, to be passed by it before being paid by the Home Mission Committee.

There is a significant hint of the sense of peril attaching to this departure in Church government in the objection lodged by the Rev. Hugh McKellar, a member of the Presbytery of Manitoba, against the word "oversight" appearing in the rules. Mr. McKellar is anxious lest the Superintendent should assume anything like episcopal control. But before the rules could reach him, the Superintendent was at his work.

There is no railway as yet leading west through his field, so he buys a horse and buggy and starts out early in August, taking the Portage trail, upon his first missionary tour, as Superintendent. On that first missionary tour he drove two thousand miles, at first through heat and dust and rain, and later through frosts and blizzards, for it was after the middle of December before he returned to Winnipeg, delivering some ninety-six sermons and forty missionary addresses.

That trail and others he will press for twenty years without halt or break or reprieve, till he lays him down to his long rest. That trail, pursued by buggy and buckboard, by cutter and "jumper," by passenger train and freight train, would girdle the earth ten times and more. Pressing that trail, he will break the way for many a pioneer missionary, who, passing beyond the sky-line of the prairie, may pass out of sight, and often out of memory of his Church, but will never be forgotten by him who first showed him this pathway to service and to glory.

XXII

THE CHURCH AND MANSE BUILDING FUND

TO the General Assembly of 1881 were sent from the Presbytery of Manitoba two overtures big with potentialities for the cause of Presbyterianism and of religion in Western Canada. One of these overtures received the approval of the Assembly and resulted in the appointment of the Rev. James Robertson, Minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, as Superintendent of Missions for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. The fate of the other overture hung in the balance for some months. It was an overture to authorize the creation of a fund to aid in the erection of churches and manses in the West.

The origin of this overture was to be found in the experience of the minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, while acting as Convener of the Presbytery's Home Mission Committee. During his various missionary tours it was pressed upon his mind with painful insistence that the missionaries in charge of the outposts of our Church were called upon to suffer what seemed to him unnecessary privation from the lack of comfortable homes, and that congregations were seriously retarded in their development from the lack of suitable buildings in which to worship.

For men and women of culture and of fine instincts to be forced to live in mud-roofed shacks, or board with families in houses of a single room, where all the domestic activities were carried on, could not fail to seriously impair the efficiency of their service. Nor was there much hope of a permanent settlement being effected in a congregation till a home could be found for the minister and his family. Further than this, while so large a proportion of the settlers were young men, unmarried and living wretchedly uncomfortable lives, it was not difficult to imagine how great an impetus would be given to the work of the Church and how vastly increased would be the hold of the minister upon his flock, had he a comfortable home into which he might welcome the stranger and the homeless of his congregation.

Mr. Robertson had often experienced, too, the depressing effect of uncongenial surroundings in connection with public worship. He had been forced to preach to the people in curious places, in shacks through whose sod roofs the rain trickled in muddy streams upon the head and down the face of the preacher. He tells us how, upon entering a sod-roofed shack during a rain-storm one day, he found the children arranged like soldiers on parade along the centre of the little room. Closer observation revealed the wisdom of this arrangement, for the only dry place in the little shack was the line underneath a wide beam that formed the ridge pole of the roof.

Another time, while the missionary was nearing the climax of his sermon, from under the bed whereon a portion of the audience had found sittings, there came the premonitory clucks of a hen indicative of a virtuous sense of duty fulfilled. At once there ensued a struggle for the attention of the audience between the zealous missionary and the industrious fowl. More and more eloquent waxed the missionary's periods, louder and louder the cluckings of the hen, till finally emerging into the open, with a few surprised if not indignant clucks at the unwonted invasion of her privacy, and then with a wild volley of frantic clucks and cluckoos, she flew through the open door, leaving the vanquished missionary to gather up the scattered members of his body of divinity and the shattered attention of his audience.

In buildings of all kinds and devoted to all purposes religious services were held, in schoolhouses, where there were any, in unfinished stores, in blacksmith shops, in granaries, hay-lofts and stables, often redolent of other than the odour of sanctity. Liberal use, too, was made of the offer of its station-houses on the part of the Canadian Pacific Railway. But often the effect of the sermon and of the whole service was marred by uncongenial and incongruous surroundings. This was notably the case when the only available spot for service happened to be the bar of a hotel. Once Mr. Robertson, coming to a settlement late on a Saturday evening, where the largest building was the hotel and the largest room the bar, inquired of the hotel man :

"Is there any place where I can hold a service to-morrow?"

"Service?"

"Yes, a preaching service."

"Preaching? Oh, yes, I'll get you one," he replied with genial heartiness.

Next day Mr. Robertson came into the bar which was crowded with men.

"Well, have you found a room for my service?" he inquired of his genial host.

"Here you are, boss, right here. Get in behind that bar and here's your crowd. Give it to 'em. God knows they need it."

Mr. Robertson caught the wink intended for the "boys" only. Behind the bar were bottles and kegs and other implements of the trade ; before it men standing up for their drinks, chaffing, laughing, swearing. The atmosphere could hardly be called congenial, but the missionary was "onto his job," as the boys afterwards admiringly said. He gave out a hymn. Some of the men took off their hats and joined in the singing, one or two whistling an accompaniment. As he was getting into his sermon one of the men, evidently the smart one of the company, broke in.

"Say, boss," he drawled, "I like yer nerve, but I don't believe yer talk."

"All right," replied Mr. Robertson, "give me a chance. When I get through you can ask any questions you like. If I can I will answer them, if I can't, I'll do my best."

The reply appealed to the sense of fair play in the crowd. They speedily shut up their companion and told the missionary to "fire ahead," which he did and to such good purpose that when he had finished there was no one ready to gibe or question. After the service was closed, however, one of them observed earnestly :

"I believe every word you said, sir. I haven't heard anything like that since I was a kid, from my Sunday-school teacher. I guess I gave her a pretty hard time. But, look here, can't you send us a missionary for ourselves? We'll all chip in, won't we, boys?"

A missionary was sent in and it was not long till a strong congregation was established in that community. But in the hands of a weaker man such a result was hardly likely to follow the services conducted in the bar-room.

In pressing the overture upon the attention of the Presbytery of Manitoba, Mr. Robertson urged the necessity of such a fund, not only in the interests of a more harmonious and effective preaching service and a greater efficiency in Church work generally, but upon a ground which he crystallized in a great phrase that has become historically associated with the memory of its creator.

He urged the importance of a church building as giving "visibility and permanence" to the cause of religion. That phrase, "visibility and permanence," became a battle-cry on his lips during his campaign for this fund, and a great battle-cry it proved. Those who have lived their lives within sight of a church and within sound of a church bell, will find it difficult, if not impossible, to estimate at full value the ethical effect of the mere building upon the moral life of the community. But men of the frontier have learned by experience how great this effect is.

A missionary writing in regard to the change wrought in the mind of the community by the building of a church says:

"Before the church was built in this village only the decidedly religious people could be got to attend service. The store was open, the bar was full, the ordinary business of the week went on as usual. But the very day the church was opened all this was changed. The store closed up, the bar was empty of all except a few recognized and well-seasoned 'toughs,' the ordinary work of the week stopped, and many came to *church* who would not think of coming to the *service* in the shack. The silent appeal of that building with the Gothic windows was a more powerful sermon than any I had ever preached."

But Mr. Robertson was not at the Assembly of 1881 to press his overture. The Assembly was doubtful. A money scheme to many of the fathers and brethren is ever a suspicious innovation. Opposition developed. The overture was in the hands of Professor Bryce and the Western representatives. So serious did the opposition become that its supporters lost heart and a motion was proposed by Mr. W. T. Wilkins, seconded by Professor Bryce, asking leave to withdraw the overture. But to the rescue came the venerable Dr. Reid, seconded by that always champion of Western Canada, Principal Grant, with an amendment to remit the overture to the Home Mission Committee. The amendment carried, and the Church and Manse Building scheme was saved for the time being.

In the Home Mission Committee, however, there was opposition, but here Mr. Robertson, now become Superintendent, was able to show the large advantage that would accrue to Home Mission work from such a fund. He was further able to report that already a considerable amount had been promised for the fund. The first contribution, to the amount of one thousand dollars, had come from a friend in Newfoundland. Presbyterians in the West had promised support. The Home Mission Committee, still uncertain as to the ultimate effect of a canvass for a new fund upon their Home Mission revenue, were still unwilling to bestow their benediction, but allowed the Superintendent to go on with the canvass.

With all the concentrated energy of his being, the new Superintendent "goes on," putting his hand to a work, the magnitude of which not even he has begun to estimate. With shrewd foresight he begins in the West. His old congregation in Winnipeg backs him up with a handsome contribution ; other congregations subscribe in proportion. Leading Presbyterians of the West, catching the spirit of the Superintendent, give largely. Then to the East he proceeds, sowing broadcast over the Church a Catechism on the Church and Manse Building Fund. It was not, indeed, the Shorter Catechism of high and honourable fame, but a new edition of the Mother's Catechism, as one said, "for it was in the interest of the boys." Wherever he can get an opening he pleads his cause. On every hand he meets opposition, from lethargic pastors, from penurious congregations, from men with rival schemes, but with unfailing good humour and with indomitable perseverance he keeps pushing the Church and Manse Building scheme.

Writing from Cobourg, under date March 7th, 1882, to his wife, he, as always, takes her fully into his confidence:

"To-night I have no meeting. I tried to arrange and the telegraph failed me. Came here last night and had a good meeting, collections $34.46. But the congregation is without a pastor and in a bad state. Tried to do something for our Church Building Fund, but met with little success. Got only about $190, but have promises of more. Hope to make it $500. Peterboro I was not able to canvass. Several things promised and I am going back there some time. I think $1,500 or $1,800 could be got there. This part of the country is not very hopeful and the young people are leaving. To-morrow I go to Madoc. I am vexed at being sent to a place so little likely to do anything for our cause, but I must go." He is labouring under the direction of his Committee, and apparently not altogether unhampered.

Again from Kingston he writes:

"Got here Saturday afternoon and am with Dr. Smith. He met me at the hotel. Called on McCuaig and Rev. Andrew Neilson about services. Preached for McCuaig yesterday morning. Congregation not large, but I understand that his is the most wealthy in Kingston. I did not get him to give a collection for the Home Mission Committee. Took tea there, however. He is soured at something about the Home Mission Committee. Which indisposition, however, is only temporary, his good sense coming to his aid. Preached for Neilson in the evening. There was a good deal of interest manifested, and I trust good will be done. But no collection was taken up for our fund. Last evening Principal Grant came to Dr. Smith's and we had a chat on matters. He goes to Ottawa to attend the Legislature anent the Union Act. The anti-Unionists are doing all they can to defeat the measure and Sir Hugh Allan, Hickson of the Grand Trunk, etc., are lobbying with the Antis. But the bill will go through, I think.

"This morning I was trying to get men out to our meeting to-night so as to get them interested in our Church Building scheme. They fight shy of the measure, but several promised to be there. Dr. D—— went with me. We are going out this afternoon again. Belleville gave but little for our fund, but I trust to go back there again and we will do better. I address the students here to-morrow. We want as many as possible of them out there—of the right kind. The desire to go out is general, and I hope we may get the right men."

"Money and men!" He does not know it, but he has entered upon his life-long hunt. Ever as he tramps the streets of these Ontario towns and drives his long drives against storm and sleet, he is thinking of the little homeless congregations on the prairie and of the homeless missionaries and missionaries' wives he is trying to settle in those homeless congregations. And, therefore, he cannot yield to discouragement, and no matter who or what may oppose, he presses hard upon his mission.

From Brockville on this same tour, under date March 22d, 1882, he writes:

"I have just got down-stairs to write you a note before I leave for Ottawa. I got here last evening and held a meeting. The day was very stormy and my attendance somewhat slim. The collection 'ditto.' I called on several before the meeting and they all appeared to be interested, but the night was such as would deter people from going out. I have no time to wait this morning to call on any for the Church and Manse Building Fund, but think that I will call here again. They think that $1,000 can be got, at any rate. I saw ex-Governor Morris at Ottawa and got $1,000 from him! I never expected the half of it." Though it is safe to say he never allowed His Honour to suspect any such modesty in his canvasser. "But I had a regular 'set to' with him in Toronto and hence he came down handsomely. Dr. Schultz promised me land to between $500 and $1,000, and I got $300 from Senator Sutherland. I am going to see some of the other men in Ottawa to-day and hope to do something. I must go to Montreal for to-morrow evening. Our meeting in Ottawa was large on Monday evening. Principal Grant, Macdonnell, and myself spoke. Grant made a capital speech. Macdonnell and myself were not so happy, but I got a good chance with them on Sabbath. I will go west from Montreal to Toronto, likely on Monday or Tuesday."

Stormy days and slim attendances do their worst, but men with vision of the coming greatness of the West are beginning to take an interest in his scheme, and so with better heart he goes to meet his still doubtful Committee.

From Toronto he writes on the 29th of March:

"I got here yesterday and was until late at the Home Mission Committee meeting. Not much business yet done. I do not know when we shall be through, but will go up to see you all as soon as I can get away, likely to-morrow.

"My Church and Manse Building scheme has not yet the approval of the Committee. They want the General Assembly to be seized of the matter and they recommend changes. I did not object and hence all, I trust, will go well." He has the genius that can wait and that knows when it is good to wait. The Committee, too, wise heads that they are, know that it will do nothing but good to allow the Assembly to view this work from many sides. He continues: "I found Montreal hard to move, but after Sabbath's services things went better. Several told me that they were much pleased with the account given of the country and would help in this scheme. Some even went so far as to call on me about the matter next morning." They are slow to move, these Montrealers, but their day for moving will come, and when they begin to get the "vision," they will be found in the line of advance. One of them has his eyes wide open already, for we read: "Dined with D. A. Smith yesterday evening, and he gave me $1,500. This is the only subscription from Montreal yet." Courage! A goodly number will follow Mr. Smith's excellent lead.

So from town to town and from congregation to congregation he pushes his relentless canvass with the help of his somewhat cautious Committee, and without it, till he arrives at Toronto, the stronghold of Presbyterianism in Canada. He is expecting much, but he is doomed to grievous disappointment.

"I am just getting ready to go out canvassing to-day. Spent a part of two days and got $1,500 more. Toronto is hard to get at. Knox College has a scheme of endowment and people have got a hint to reserve their strength for that. Toronto was always selfish. It is Toronto first, last, and always. They will support what will build up Toronto, but for outside objects they give as little as they decently can."

Which all goes to show that Toronto is like other cities and like mankind generally, endowed with a very considerable amount of human nature. But Toronto, like Montreal, will change her mind about this man and about his work. The day will come when she will respond with loyal and eager enthusiasm when he leads. So off he goes to Montreal, where he remains till the meeting of the General Assembly which this year takes place in St. John.

With a brave heart he meets this august and venerable body and, indeed, he well may. It is his first appearance as Superintendent of Missions. To most of the fathers and brethren he is quite unknown by face. But already there is rumour attaching to him, and it is with keen expectancy that they wait his first appearance. He is asked to address the house in regard to the Church and Manse Building Fund. Tall and spare of form, rugged of face, and with the burr of the land of his birth still ringing in his voice, he rises to address the Assembly. Modestly, but with masterly management of his facts and with quiet touches of pawky humour here and there lighting up his narrative, he recounts his initial experience as a canvasser for Church funds.

It is the story of an extraordinary triumph. He has succeeded in enlisting the moral and financial support of leading Presbyterians of both East and West. He has secured from the Canadian Pacific Railway Company the promise to transport all building material at two-thirds the ordinary rate. Manitoba has already pledged $36,000 for the fund. With a very partial canvass he has subscriptions from the East amounting to nearly $28,000. His total subscriptions to date amount to the magnificent sum of $63,726 and this, with promises more or less definitely given, he has reason to believe will give a grand total of $66,626!

While he is addressing the Assembly he holds in his hand a small black note-book. Ah, that note-book! What dismay it has struck to the heart of many an unwary critic! What foreboding it has brought to the mind of an unhappy and unwilling contributor! But what cheer and inspiration to many a doubtful Church court and depressed congregation! The Assembly listen amazed. That by a single man during the few months at his disposal, with the hesitating support of a Committee not yet fully committed to the scheme, this large sum—and for those days it was, indeed, a large sum—should have been raised, seemed an almost impossible achievement. The effect upon the minds of the fathers and brethren was great and immediate. There and then they, and especially the great leaders among them, took their new Superintendent to their hearts and gave him their confidence. He will have many a battle yet to fight; opposition, hostility, criticism, are yet in store for him, but from this moment his Church will not waver in following his lead. The future of the Church and Manse Building Fund, by the statement of the new Superintendent, was fully assured.

The raising and organizing of the Church and Manse Building Fund was, indeed, an achievement which might entitle any man to a high place in the esteem and the remembrance of his Church. The history of the growth and the operations of this fund only add to the lustre of his name who had the eye to see its necessity, the courage to plan, and the genius to carry out to a successful issue a scheme so fraught with blessing to the whole of Canada, both West and East. The phenomenal success of the first canvass made the further prosecution of the work an easier task. The Newfoundland friend who had given the first thousand dollars, hearing of the work being accomplished through the fund, secured from sympathetic friends a second thousand. A Toronto contributor returning from a tour of the West and seeing the work done through the country, expressed himself as highly pleased, and offered to increase his subscription. "When a leading Episcopalian was speaking to me," he said to the Superintendent, "about the energy of our Church and her success, I felt proud of being a Presbyterian." Another contributor of Toronto, similarly impressed with the value of the fund, volunteered to become a life-subscriber. Before five years had passed, the subscription list had grown to $114,792, though it is fair to say that owing to the severity of the financial depression following the collapse of the boom in the West, a considerable portion of the money subscribed could not be collected.

In his campaigning for funds, the Superintendent literally obeyed the Scriptural injunction to be instant in season and out of season. He never let an opportunity slip. On one occasion a good friend of his living in Ottawa, a university classmate, learning that the Superintendent was one of a party snow-bound for two or three days on the line between Pembroke and Ottawa, met him at the train on its arrival and with warm hospitality carried him off to his home, where he entertained him for some days right royally. As a further courtesy, the Ottawa gentleman put him up at the Rideau Club. Running his eye one day over the list of club members, the Superintendent made the happy discovery of some forty or fifty names of good Presbyterians. It looked like good hunting to him, and, like a hound upon the scent, he took up the trail. Not a man of them escaped, and it was many months before his Ottawa friend heard the last of the joke he had unwittingly played upon his unsuspecting club members.

Eager though he was to secure contributions for his cause, the Superintendent never sacrificed his self-respect and never allowed any man either to bully or to patronize him. On one occasion when in Ottawa he met a Canadian Pacific Railway magnate coming out of the Parliament Buildings.

"Well, Mr. Robertson," said the C. P. R. magnate, "I suppose you are on one of your begging tours."

"I am doing your work, sir," replied the Superintendent with dignity.

"My work?"

"Yes, sir. You are a Presbyterian, you are a Canadian, and you are interested in the West." And he proceeded to indoctrinate his listener in regard to his duty and privilege as a good Presbyterian and loyal Canadian towards the country from which he drew no inconsiderable portion of his income.

"Well," replied the great man, "I'll give you fifty dollars."

"No, sir. I can't take fifty dollars from you."

"Why not?" was the indignant reply.

"I am going this afternoon to see Mr. X, Mr. Y, Mr. Z," mentioning the names of prominent wholesale men in Ottawa. "If they see your name down for fifty dollars they will at once put down their names for ten."

"You won't take fifty, then?"

"No, sir, I can't afford to."

"Well, good-morning," was the reply, and off went the C. P. R. magnate with his head in the air.

The Superintendent rolled up a good subscription list in Ottawa and Montreal, and the year following met the railway gentleman in the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa.

"Well, Mr. Robertson," was his greeting, "you are still on the warpath."

"Still at your work, sir," was the reply.

"What will you take this year?"

"What will you give, sir?" was the cautious answer.

"I'll give you $250, but don't come back again."

"I'll take this," was the reply, "and thank you, sir, but I make no promises for the future. Good-morning, sir." And with that swift downward grip of his he left the railway man looking after him with covetous eyes. It was a pity that such a man should be wasted on canvassing for Church funds.

Not often did the Superintendent suffer abuse, and not always did he suffer in silence. During a canvass in the city of Toronto a friend who had subscribed liberally to his fund inquired, "Why not call upon my friend Mr. Blank? He is a Presbyterian and wealthy. He ought to give you something." He did not add that the friend in question was notoriously and constitutionally averse to subscription books of all kinds soever. In due time the Superintendent tapped at this wealthy Presbyterian's office door.

"Come in," called a gruff voice.

He opened the door and stood with a pleasant smile, waiting an invitation to enter.

"Oh, I know you. You're after money for that God-forsaken country of yours," was the almost fierce greeting hurled at him over the desk. "Well, I tell you, you needn't come in here." And without pause, the loyal Presbyterian poured forth his indignation and contempt upon the surprised canvasser and his cause. But he had chosen the wrong man upon whom to vent his fury. With growing wrath the Superintendent listened till the man had quite exhausted his breath and his vocabulary, then took a turn himself.

"Mr. Blank, I came to your office, sir, at the suggestion of a friend of yours," he said in that vibrant voice of his. "I thought I was coming to see a gentleman. I was mistaken. You didn't even offer me a seat. You gave me no opportunity to tell my business, you have heaped abuse upon me, but more than that, sir, you have vilified the cause which is the cause of the Church of which you profess to be a member, sir." And with cold and merciless deliberation he proceeded to remove the successive layers of pachydermatous tissue till he had the man on the raw. Then he poured forth an array of facts in regard to the country and the work he had in hand, driving them home with that long, bony index finger till the man was glad to get him out of his office with a proper apology and a check for one hundred dollars. Neither of them, however, saw the humour of the situation till the following year when the Superintendent was calling for his next annual installment.

When once a man whose conscience was normally active allowed the Superintendent to get him at short range, the result was almost always a subscription. On one of his hasty tours through British Columbia he took the opportunity of calling upon a Provincial Cabinet Minister, a gentleman of considerable wealth and devoted to the Presbyterian Church. The Superintendent laid the necessities of his cause before his sympathetic hearer and was gratified to receive a prompt response. The Cabinet Minister drew forth his check-book and writing out his check, handed it to his visitor. The Superintendent glanced at the check without reply. It was drawn for one hundred dollars.

"Well," said the subscriber with considerable surprise, "is not that satisfactory?"

"Hardly, from you, sir."

"Why, how much do you want?"

"Just another nothing, sir," pointing to the last figure on the check.

"What! A thousand dollars?"

"A thousand dollars, sir," replied the Superintendent, and sitting down, he drew his chair close to that of the Cabinet Minister, leaned towards him and with his hand upon his knee, went seriously at the business of revealing to him his privilege in the matter. It took one hour's talk, but as the Superintendent naïvely remarked, "It was worth it. I got my thousand dollars!"

The summary of what the fund had accomplished during the first five years of its history is the most complete justification of its existence. This summary is found in a statement by the Superintendent accompanying the Annual Report of the Board for the year 1887, and forms so remarkable a paper that it should have a place in the memory of all Presbyterians who love their Church and of all Canadians who love their country. It is as follows:

"The Church and Manse Building Fund was born of necessity. For several years before the Northwest was connected with the outside world by rail, settlers in considerable numbers were coming in. Their numbers increased as the prospects of a railway brightened. A large proportion of the newcomers were Presbyterians. Many of them were young, with characters unformed and with religious convictions unsettled. Some were in quest of homes, others of wealth. The wholesome restraints of settled society were wanting. With the break-up of home associations and the absence of restraint there lay the danger of the religious instincts becoming enfeebled and the sense of moral obligation blunted. If religious institutions were not planted among them and the teachings of early life followed up, indifference, irreligion, and vice were certain to become prevalent. The facts were laid before the Church, and prompt and energetic action was taken. Missionaries were appointed, and money voted to support them.

"But no sooner did missionaries appear on the ground than other difficulties presented themselves. There were neither churches in which to hold services, nor houses to shelter missionaries and their families. The Foreign Mission Committee appropriates its money to erect chapels, purchase bungalows, or procure health retreats. The moneys of the Home Mission Committee can only be voted to help to pay the salaries of missionaries.

"My first tour through our mission fields opened my eyes. Settlement was being rapidly effected, but for the eight years between 1874 and 1882 only fifteen churches had been erected. Schoolhouses were very few in number, and when available the low seats and narrow spacing proved rather trying to the long leg and longer thigh of the athletic Manitobans. I shall say nothing of the trials of female dress, with its projections and distentions. Services were, consequently, held for the most part in private houses, and as the ceiling was sometimes low and formed of hay or sod, it seemed a blessing to be short of stature. In summer, stables and stable lofts, byres and granaries, were fitted up ; but the crowing, clucking and cackling of irreverent poultry, the barking of dogs, or the gambols of cattle, were too trying to the risibilities of the young ; and odours more pungent than pleasant gave the sensitive nostril or the refractory stomach an excuse to rebel.

"Railway stations and section houses, unfinished stores and dwelling-houses, private and public halls were extemporized into churches wherever available ; but the rent of halls frequently left little of the revenue to be applied on salary, as such halls were built 'on spec,' and supposed to pay themselves in three years. Hotel parlours and dining-rooms, billiard and bar-rooms were secured, but only occasionally. It was feared by the owner that the service might interfere with the legitimate trade of the place. I have preached in the front of a house when the proprietor was selling whiskey in the rear, but I had the satisfaction of knowing that he was fined $200 and sent six months to jail. Ludicrous incidents could be given and laughable stories told. But missionaries compelled to labour in this way felt as if they laboured in vain and spent their strength for naught.

"The need of manses was greater still. Missionaries could get houses to rent at only a few points, and twenty dollars per month was asked for very inferior accommodation. When it is borne in mind that the salary was only eight hundred dollars, it will be seen that it was impossible for a minister to engage a house at such a figure. I have visited delicate, refined women and cultured ministers in houses scarcely fit to shelter cattle. Dr. Guthrie, in appealing to Scottish audiences for money with which to build manses for Free Church ministers, pointed his appeals with instances of heroic suffering. Cases of greater hardships could be cited in the history of missions in Manitoba. Disappointment, sickness, and diminished power for work followed. Men lost their 'spring'—their energy,—and the work languished. An effort was made to reach the ear of the East, but a wilderness lay between, and Eastern pastors were busy with their own work.

"But why did not the people build? They could not. Many of them were poor—financial depression drove them from the homes of their youth. For the first few years it was all outgo and no income with them. Building timber could not be had but at a few points; lumber and hardware were dear. Something had to be done to encourage, to stimulate, else the work would fail. Such were the circumstances that called the fund into existence, and similar circumstances created funds in the American churches.

"The effect of the fund on the work of the Church has been unmistakable. It has given visibility to Presbyterianism. There is not a village or town of any importance between Lake Superior and the Rocky Mountains that is not provided with a church, and many of the buildings are creditable structures. Rat Portage, Carberry, Brandon, Oak Lake, Virden, Whitewood, Moosomin, Wolseley, Grenfell, Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, Regina, Moosejaw, Medicine Hat, and Calgary, on the main line of the C. P. R.; Gladstone, Neepawa, Minnedosa, Rapid

City, Strathclair, Shoal Lake, and Birtle, on the Manitoba and North-Western Railway; Morden, Manitou, Pilot Mound and Boissevain, on the Pembina Mountain Railway, not to speak of Lethbridge and McLeod, Edmonton, Battleford, Fort Saskatchewan, Carman, Fort Qu'Appelle and the rest, all owe their churches to this fund. During the last five years eighty-two churches, four church manses and seventeen manses have been built, or one hundred and three structures in all, and of these ninety-four were assisted from the Church and Manse Fund. For the eight years prior to the existence of the fund only fifteen churches and manses were built, or not quite an average of two, while since the existence of the fund the average has been nearly twenty-one a year.

"The possession of a church has increased the audience, and widened the sphere for the ministers' usefulness. Jones would not attend services held in Brown's house, and Brown honestly paid Jones back; both attend services in the church.

"A church affords facilities for the prosecution of Sabbath-school work. In a country where religious training is too often neglected at home, the Sabbath-school is scarcely less important than the public service. The attendance at the Sabbath-schools has increased nearly tenfold since the fund was organized.

"Churches have increased attendance on public service and swelled the revenues of congregations. Until Port Arthur had a church it received $300 from the Home Mission Fund; with the dedication of its church the congregation became self-sustaining. The contributions of Edmonton went up from $300 to $700, and those of Rat Portage from $550 to $1,000. Calgary became self-sustaining in three years, and now gives its pastor $1,200 per annum. Regina, Boissevain, Virden, Qu'Appelle, Oak Lake, and other centres experienced similar benefits.

"The increase in congregational contributions has enabled the Church to extend her operations. The money saved in older districts has been available for work in new fields. If to-day there is no settlement of any size or a centre of any promise where a missionary of the Church is not ministering to the religious wants of the people, it is to a considerable extent due to the operations of the Church and Manse Board. The fund has been a valuable aid in church extension.

"It has saved money directly to missionaries and the funds of the Church. Seventeen manses have been already erected. At an average rental of $15 per month, an annual saving of $3,060 is effected. This sum capitalized at eight per cent., the ruling rate of bank interest, would amount to $38,250, or four-fifths of the total amount expended by the Board. Wherever the minister of an augmented congregation is provided with a manse, he receives $50 less from the Augmentation Fund. These manses have contributed to the comfort of our missionaries, and so removed the reproach of neglect on the part of the Church. It has increased their power to help young people, and so to weld the congregation into a compact whole.

"The timely aid extended has cheered the hearts of missionaries and people; it has helped to make the Church one and keep the West closely attached to the East. In their times of political disintegration this is a national blessing.

"With all that has been done, the work of the Board is only beginning. New fields in considerable numbers are being occupied every year. Four-fifths of the ministers are without manses, and three-fourths of the points occupied are without churches.

"During last summer several contributors to the fund, from Toronto, Montreal, and other centres, visited the country. They expressed themselves much pleased with the work of the Board, and they have increased their former contributions. Their cordial approval influenced their acquaintances to help the work."

And so from year to year this fund will continue to be a source of blessing to both congregations and missionaries and a mighty influence in the establishing of true religion in the hearts and lives of the people of Western Canada. Long years afterwards, in the last report which he will submit to his Church, this significant record of nineteen years' work will find a place:

"It is nearly nineteen years since the Board was organized; at that time the Presbyterian Church owned only eighteen churches and three manses between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast. During these nineteen years, the Board has aided in erecting 393 churches, eighty-two manses, and three schoolhouses to be used as churches, or 478 buildings in all, worth about $574,000."

A year later, the report will open with this pathetic word:

"The report this year is drawn by a new hand. The hand that for the last twenty years prepared the annual statement of the work done by the Church and Manse Board is still, alas, forever." And then the report will proceed to give this magnificent summary of twenty years' work: "It would be impossible to estimate the value of the aid given by the fund to our whole work by the erection of church buildings during the last twenty years. This fund has assisted in the erection of 419 churches, ninety manses, and four schoolhouses, and has put the Church in possession of property worth $603,835; but the value to the Church in Western Canada cannot be estimated in dollars and cents. The equipment in churches and manses is the least of the advantages that have come to the Church by means of this fund."

It is largely due to the influence of the Christian Church that in no part of Western Canada has there ever been a "wild West" in the American sense of that word, and of that part of the credit due to the Presbyterian Church for this, a large share must be ascribed to the operation of this Church and Manse Building Fund, which has helped to give "visibility and permanence" to religion in nearly 500 settlements widely scattered throughout Western Canada. In this connection, a paragraph in the London *Times* of August 18th, 1904, referring to the proposed visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to Canada, makes good reading :

"Informal consultations with such Canadian bishops as the Archbishop can find an opportunity to meet on their own ground cannot but be an advantage for the future development of their work. He will get far enough West to realize that prompt pioneer work in the interests of the Anglican Church is essential, but he will understand the urgency of such work and will admire the enterprise of his fellow Scots, who are planting the Presbyterian ministry all over the remote West."

And in that planting the master hand was his to whose seeing eye the possibilities of harvest were so vividly evident, and to whose genius was due that splendid instrument of spiritual garnering, the Church and Manse Building Fund.

XXIII

FIVE GREAT YEARS—I

THE year 1881 will be remembered by Western Canadians as long as an old timer survives to recount the wild tales of those wild days. The country was possessed of a spirit of adventure. Land fever, the germs of which lie in every human heart, had smitten the peoples into whose ears had come the rumour of the wheat lands of Western Canada. For three years, ever since the railway had made the West easily accessible, this rumour had spread till in the townships of Eastern Canada the sturdy farmer and his sons had caught a vision of wide stretches of waving wheat reaching to the horizon, and, selling their narrow fields, they had "struck" the Western trail. Into the remote and secluded hamlets of the home countries, too, across the sea, this rumour of land had made its way, and falling upon the ears of the land-hungry among these sorely betaxed and be-feud folk, had set a fever burning in their bones till they sold all and sailed for the far away West. And, small wonder, for here was *land*, rich and deep and free to all who cared to "take it up," land without feu or rental, with no shadow of overlord or factor or rent-racker to fall across it, land free as God's free air. No wonder the peoples went mad. But, alas! out of this fever greed would make gain, for however land may be free from the hand of God, by man's hand are burdens soon laid upon it. Hence, men began traffic in land, till for the poor man none was available but such as lay far from civilization.

And so west and south and north the land-seekers thronged the back trails, disappearing over the rim of the prairie and forgotten—but not by all. Fathers and mothers could not forget their sons, and the great mother Church, too, remembered her children with longing, and with a sense of responsibility more or less deep. Hence, the Superintendent of Western Missions.

His was even then a field of "magnificent distances." For though the settlements lay for the most part within a radius of two hundred miles from Winnipeg, from the far *hinterland* there came tales of little settlements and lonely homesteaders beyond touch of their Church, and now and then a cry from some distant outpost for help, as from far-off Edmonton, nine hundred miles away. None too soon had the Manitoba Presbytery overtured the Venerable the General Assembly for a man to be given the task of finding out and of caring for these lonely settlers, and none too soon that august body, charged with the spiritual shepherding of nearly a thousand families that were known to be strewn far and wide over a thousand miles of prairie, had, set apart a man to be eyes and ears and hands to the Church on behalf of these her far-strewn children, who, in their hunger for land and treasure, were sorely tempted to forget that better country and the treasure that will not pass away. But to find them out and to bring them under the Church's care was a task which seemed to the Committee in Toronto almost beyond their resources to accomplish. The treasury was empty, labourers could not be had, and the Church as a whole was all but indifferent, because only vaguely aware of the facts.

To this as a first duty, therefore, the new Superintendent set himself, to get to know the facts himself, and then to get his Church to know them. For he had this faith, that having clear knowledge of these facts, at once terrible and inspiring, the Church could not rest indifferent to them. And throughout the whole course of his superintendency this twofold duty he kept steadily in mind and ever strove to fulfill, to know the facts and to make his Church know them.

Given a work to do, the Superintendent was not the man to delay its doing. And so, in less than a week after he has entered upon his office, we find him on the trail. On the 24th of July of this year, 1881, the Presbytery dissolved the tie that bound him to Knox Church, and on July 29th we have him writing to his wife from Dominion City: "I am making my first official visit as Superintendent of Missions to this place to-day." Dominion City is in a tangle and is discouraged, and it is significant of all his future service that his first bit of work is to compose difficulties and to cheer on the discouraged. From Dominion City he proceeds to Morris, where he conducts service on the Sabbath day, returning to Winnipeg the day after. "I do not know what course I shall take after that," he writes. "I am now inclined to visit the Little Saskatchewan country first. Things are in a bad state there, I fear." It will always be so. Where things are in a bad state, there will this Superintendent be found.

He decides that his first missionary tour shall be in the Little Saskatchewan country, but before he leaves the city there is a difficulty to be met which concerns his fellow-workers in the West. Their fields have fallen into arrears of salary till there is due the somewhat serious amount of $1,789.67. With the Convener of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee upon the spot, the moment is favourable for settlement, and so a conference is held, and it is agreed that the missionaries shall lose $568.00, the Manitoba Presbytery shall raise $761.67, and the remaining $500 the Convener undertakes on behalf of the Eastern Committee. So, in the month of August, with the slate clean, the Superintendent with his new horse and buckboard, into which he packs his new tent and camp outfit, sets off for the Little Saskatchewan country.

The 20th of August finds him in Brandon, from which he writes to his wife :

"MY DEAR WIFE :—

"By the heading of this you will see that I have reached the city of Brandon at last. My last to you was, I think (I am passing so quickly, though, I almost forget), from Milford. I went up to Lang's Valley and arranged for service there, and finding I could not cross the Souris without some risk, I concluded to return to Milford and cross by the ferry. I then came to Mair's Landing and stayed there all night. Yesterday morning I struck out for the Brandon Hills, about eleven miles out, and called at Killam's. After finding out all the Presbyterians in that neighbourhood, I came over to Bertram's, about two miles, and had the horse fed and got dinner for myself. It was raining some, but not much. I started away and called at Mr. Chapman's. They were busy shocking up some wheat. Moving on, I called at one house and found three women ; explained to them the object of my visit and inquired as to the possible injury R—— might do us in the course he has chosen to adopt." R—— is a disgruntled missionary who, being unequal to the task of shepherding the flock, determines to have his rightful share of the fleece as compensation ; a natural enough desire, but one wholly repellent to the soul of the Superintendent and disastrous to the work he has in hand. "I found his influence is little. He has disgusted many by his selfish and secular course. I found, moreover, that the Nova Scotians who came over with him to the south side of the Assiniboine are few in number. Proceeding on my way, I came to his house, and they asked me to stay to tea. I accepted the offer and left soon after. I ascertained from him that there were several Presbyterians to the west and north of the Brandon Hills. Got the names of all he knew. Got him to give me a statement of his claim for expenses. It is rather flimsy, but it is better paid. He got $150 from the people, and claims $300 more for expenses.

"After leaving his house, went on my way to Brandon after dark, and a dark, murky, rainy night it was. Had to cross about four hundred acres of breaking. When I got there, went with my horse to a stable and had him looked after. Went up to Mrs. Douglas' house and found that she could not accommodate me. Concluded to tent. Her young fellows offered to help me to pitch tent and get hay. Got to work and soon had things snug and comfortable, and was soon asleep. This morning I got up betimes and looked out—foggy it all looked and a heavy odour of skunk was in the air. Got breakfast and found horse all right. Stay here to-morrow and go to Grand Valley and Boggy Creek. Am in excellent health and enjoy trip very much."

Thus filling his note-book with statistics of all kinds, he pursues his way, going still north and west, everywhere discovering lost and strayed sheep of the Presbyterian fold, and everywhere leaving behind him something in the way of organization for their shepherding and much good hope and comfort. A letter, dated four days later, finds him still further north and west of Brandon. Having left Rapid City behind him, he writes as follows:

"You see I have made another stage in my tour. I sent you a letter from Brandon in the morning. The attendance at Brandon was about sixty. The service was held in an unfinished house. In the afternoon, I preached at Grand Valley, about three miles down the river. The building was a rude shanty. The gaps between the boards were large and the place was airy. There was no floor, not even a door, except a board nailed across to keep cattle out. Birds had come in freely during the week evidently, and left traces of their presence on the desk. There was an attendance of about sixty-five. At the close of the service in both places I explained to the people the state of our Mission fund and got committee appointed and to work. Got back to Brandon by dusk and found about seventy teams crossing the ferry from the north to the south side of the Assiniboine loaded with railroad plant and oats. It is too bad that there should be such utter disregard of the Sabbath and its claims.

"Was in time to hear part of a sermon from Professor Burwash of Victoria University, Cobourg. Went out on Monday to Elton, about twelve or thirteen miles, to a station of Mr. Hyde's. Quite a number assembled there and I preached and organized committees and gave directions. I returned home and went to call on a minister, Mr. F——, who is settled at Grand Valley, but who does not come to church. I found him at home, but his residence was rude and uncomfortable. He had some men harvesting for him and a neighbour woman cooking. The place was very uninviting. Had a long talk with him and a service with him and men, and found that he made the excuse of poverty the plea for non-attendance on ordinances.

"Drove to Brandon, and, after putting horse away, went through the town to find out who lived in it. Nobody appears to know anybody else there. They speak to each other, but do not know each other's names. Went to one store and found a man taking in some goods that had been exposed all day at the door. I asked whose store it was, thinking him a clerk. He scratched his head and said, 'Well, I don't know what his name is. We call him Johnny.'

"Next morning did the rest of Brandon and found out who the Presbyterians are. Gave a list to Mr. Ferries and told him to visit them all and any others coming in. It will never do to have him stationed out so far. If he is to be minister there he must reside in the town." Mr. Ferries is, doubtless, on a homestead, seeking to establish for himself and his family a home, a laudable enough idea, but inconsistent with the best results for "the Cause," hence the Superintendent will have him change his base. The Cause is first; all else, however worthy, is second. "Took steps also for a place in which to worship all winter. Nobody there has any means, and all are too busy with their own affairs to do anything except they are urged. Mr. F—— has not the confidence either. Fear I must return in a short time there. Nothing was done in either place for winter supply. Left Brandon and travelled to Rapid City, twenty or twenty-five miles. Left there to come to Mr. Smith's."

At this point he is upon the borderland of civilization, but still he presses his way into the then unknown territory, till he reaches the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Fort Ellis, from which he writes the following note to his wife:

"I arrived here last evening at sunset and held service with the men at the Fort. Mr. McDonald is absent at Grand Valley. Mrs. McDonald did much to make me comfortable. Mr. Hodnett came up with me. He goes back this morning, and I go alone to Shell River, thirty-five miles distant. There is a good trail, the day is fine, and I have no fear. There was frost here last night, the first of the season. The scenery here is very fine. Next year I must bring you West here to see snatches of scenery that have pleased me much. The country here differs much from what we have in Eastern Manitoba."

By September 27th he is on his return journey, working his way back towards Winnipeg where he has to meet his Presbytery with his Report. Arriving at Gladstone, he writes to his wife as follows, anxious to keep in touch with her as best as he can :

"You see I am coming nearer the borders of civilization. I am now within forty miles or so of the cars, and that distance can be travelled in a day.

"I left Salisbury on the morning of yesterday and drove to the Beautiful Plains country. For a time the land looked well, although it is somewhat light.

"We reached McGregor Station about three o'clock, and saw quite a number of people about the door. The house was full of very respectable people and I found that there were eight children to be baptized. After service we discussed Church matters and had fifty or sixty dollars subscribed on the spot for Mr. Stewart's salary. The McGregors are from near our place and knew my father's people. Stayed all night. I knew we should be among the beasts at Ephesus at night, but I was resigned. They were all very kind—not the beasts—but one could see at once that the whole place must be full of ———." This was a condition of things almost universally prevalent at that time in stopping places throughout the West, and one it was almost impossible to prevent, but none the less trying for that. Many a night will he be driven from his bed before "the beasts" have done with him. "Such were my thoughts, and I was not disappointed. My arms and neck had plenty of pink marks with a dark spot in the centre as I washed myself this morning. This morning they took us out after breakfast to see the garden, and it was a fine sight.

"Made a number of calls this afternoon. To-morrow (D. V.) we go to Blake township, northwest of Gladstone. To-morrow evening there is a tea meeting when they expect to pay off the debt on the church. Friday we go to

Pine Creek and Saturday we have a meeting here. Sabbath I preach here in the morning, at Woodside in the afternoon and Westbourne in the evening. Next morning I drive to Portage la Prairie and reach Winnipeg that night. The meeting of Presbytery is the following Wednesday and I must prepare my report of work done and get ready for the meeting in Toronto. I intend to come back to Burnside and preach on October 8th, and see the stations under Mr. McRae's charge. This will occupy my time for two days or so. I intend to leave for Toronto about Thursday of that week and will try and reach you Saturday, so as to spend Sabbath and Monday there. I am trying to arrange ahead, although it is not easy. I ought to return in time to visit stations south of the Assiniboine before winter."

In this whirlwind manner, preaching, visiting, organizing, crowding his days and his nights full of work, he brings to a close his first missionary tour, having driven his buckboard over 2,000 miles and having conducted nearly 200 meetings of various kinds.

He brought back with him a great wealth of knowledge, exact, and in detail, concerning every village, every settlement and, indeed, every homestead he had visited. The country and its resources, the people, their ancestry, their characteristics, their prospects, their difficulties, too, and their needs, the progress of railway building, the administration of Government, the undeveloped wealth of the country, the educational requirements, on these and other subjects relative to the country and its people, he had gathered interesting, full and accurate information. Into his little black note-book, but still more into his tenacious memory, he had packed this knowledge, and all of it he will use some day, for the good of his people and for the glory of God.

On the 11th of October the Assembly's Home Mission

Committee met in Toronto, and to this Committee the Superintendent presented his first report. That was a distinguished Committee, and it was not without trepidation he met them. He was new to the work and there were great men on that Committee, some of the greatest the Canadian Church has known, among them leaders like Cochrane, King, Warden, Macdonnell, Laing, Taylor. No wonder he is conscious of some tremors. But the day will come when he will stand the peer of any of them. Modestly he presents his report, making light of his labours, but making much of the needs of the people he represents, and of the opportunities the field offers. The report is received and considered, and, doubtless, is adopted, though of this there is no record. Nor is there mention of a single word of appreciation by this Committee of the work done by the new Superintendent. But there is demand made of him by this financially exacting and painstaking Committee for a report as to the expenditure of a thousand dollars granted the spring before for exploratory work. This, happily, the Superintendent can give, but only in the merest outline. The Committee, however, with a conscience for trust funds will have no outline report in the matter of expenditure of money. So, with the thanks of his Committee, or without them, the record does not say, but with their demand that he should account rigidly for that thousand dollars, he goes back again to his work, and December finds him again on the trail in Southern Manitoba, where, in company with the newly appointed missionary of Pilot Mound, the Rev. James Farquharson, a man truly after his own heart, he drives over a large section of that country. The following extract from a letter written long afterwards by Dr. Farquharson gives a vivid picture of some of their experiences on that trip:

"Dr. Robertson came to my place December, 1881.

He visited the stations now organized as Pilot Mound, Crystal City, LaRiviere, and Snowflake. Preaching on the Sabbath at Preston and Pilot Mound, on Monday he held a meeting at Clearwater to see what would be done towards calling a minister. After dinner we started for Cartwright, sixteen miles west.

"I stayed in a shack, the Doctor visiting two families. He came back that night, not having received an invitation to remain at either place he visited over night. We passed a night never to be forgotten by either of us.

"Next morning we went to Mr. LaRiviere's at Turtle Mountain, a distance of thirty miles, over a bleak prairie. The Doctor preached there and left an appointment for organization on our return. Mr. LaRiviere had treated us with very great kindness. He was a French Canadian. The next morning we drove along the base of the mountains sixteen miles, and had dinner at Mr. Miller's. Left an appointment for our return; continued west sixteen miles to Mr. Newcome's and stayed over night, preached and organized there, and baptized some children. Kindly treated by Mr. Newcome, who was Dominion Land Agent.

"Returned for the night to Mr. Miller's. The Doctor preached, organized, and baptized. We took a list of members of the Episcopalian and Methodists to present to their own Churches." He is frankly and very keenly a Presbyterian, but he is a gentleman as well, and a Christian, and on his record there is no stain by reason of failure in the Christian courtesy that refuses to take advantage of a sister Church. "Were very kindly treated. Returned to Mr. LaRiviere's, preached, organized, and remained over night. It was pleasant to see how he would get the confidence of the people. He was simply Mr. Robertson, one of themselves.

"We broke our cutter, and had to buy a jumper from the half-breeds. We fastened the cutter on top of the jumper, and the next morning drove to my place, a distance of fifty miles.

"It was on that tour that Dr. Robertson decided that the number of children for a school should be changed from fourteen to eight. Owing to the amount of railroad land, the country was very thinly settled. As he expressed it—we must meet the educational needs of the children, or the next generation will grow up in ignorance. At the first meeting of the School Board in Winnipeg he brought the matter up and had the number changed from fourteen to eight scholars for a school.

"I have heard Dr. Robertson tell how the vermin he carried with him after that night at Cartwright became so intolerable that when he reached LaRiviere's little store at what is now Wakopa, he bought a suit of underclothing. When he asked for the clothing, LaRiviere said, 'What? Did you sleep at the Badger?' (The early name for Cartwright.)"

A little later the tour of this part of Manitoba was completed, of which Dr. Farquharson writes as follows:

"Again I accompanied him on a tour of visitation for four or five days. He usually addressed two meetings a day, and always one, and drove from ten to twenty miles. We had expected that the meeting on the Friday evening would close the week's work, so that each of us might return to our place of preaching for the Sabbath; but at the close of the Friday evening meeting we learned that there was a settlement about twelve miles further on, composed largely of Presbyterians, in which there was no service. Immediately our plans were changed, so that Saturday could be spent in the new settlement. That night was spent in 'a stopping place,' and Dr. Robertson and I roomed together in a small bedroom off the sitting-room. We roomed together, but we slept not, neither did we lie down to rest. A hurried inspection revealed the fact that the bed was preëmpted by the living pest which a man shakes not off, as in the morning he crawls from under the bedclothing. We determined to keep the fire in the sitting-room going, and so maintain a degree of comfort during the winter night. But some parties, by making a bed beside the sitting-room stove, spoiled our plan and imprisoned us in our room for the night. We walked the floor, we jumped, and, if not very artistically, at least with some vigour, we danced, that the temperature of the body might be maintained at a considerably higher rate than the temperature of the room. The night passed, and so did the breakfast hour, and we started on our twelve-mile drive.

"On arriving at the centre of the settlement, a house for the evening meeting was very cordially placed at our disposal, and we started to drive round the settlement for the purpose of inviting the people to the meeting. Returning, we had supper and awaited the arrival of the congregation.

"In a small dwelling-house with low ceiling, some twenty settlers gathered for the service. What is there in such a meeting place or in such a company to arouse the enthusiasm of the preacher? There would have been nothing surprising if the languor incident to a week of such work and a sleepless night had robbed the address of every particle of life. Yet Dr. Robertson spoke with all the vigour of the man who steps out from his comfortable study to an equally comfortable church and a congregation capable of inspiring enthusiasm for the one service of the day. That night another station was added to Manitoba's rapidly growing list of preaching stations.

"Early next morning we parted, Dr. Robertson to go west and I east. He would travel at least forty miles that day, probably more."

Nothing appeared to tire him, so, at least, we thought at that time. We found later that the eager, invincible spirit was chafing thin even that sinewy body.

So the winter months find him still on the trail, heedless of frost or blizzard, till the holiday season is upon him, and he writes this touching Christmas letter dated December 26th from Winnipeg, Man.

"My dear Wife :—

"It is nearly four in the morning and I have not gone to bed yet. I am going west to-morrow, or rather to-day, as far as Big Plains, and I am getting things into shape. I have been writing all day and have just got through. Xmas was a quiet day with me this year. Many a time during the day I wondered what you were all doing. I would have given a good deal to have been with you. What did my poor children get for presents this year, and mamma? I could not get anything through the post of any account, and I concluded to get my presents when I went down. How I would have liked to see their pleasant glee and to hear their noises in the morning. But I must do without, this year. I went into several stores on Saturday and envied the folks buying for their children. But after this year I trust to be with you at Xmas. Mr. Hart invited Thomson and myself for midday dinner. We had a swell affair, though no plum pudding. A special dinner was served at the Queens at night. I send you the bill of fare. The place was hung with Chinese lanterns and everything was most tastefully arranged. The waiting, as usual, was abominable, and the dinner was spoiled. The folks succeeded in getting well drunk. I got away after the eating was done. I thought I saw some women who were a little funny after the affair. . . . I am trying to get up a church building scheme. I enclose a circular so that you can see what it is. It is necessary that something be done. I am promised some aid here, and after canvassing the city I will see what can be done below.

"Knox Church is talking about selling the Church again. They want $100,000, for it. Should they get it I want them to head the list with $10,000."

Christmas is a great family festival with the Robertsons, but this Christmas is to the father and mother, at least, one of the sad days of the year, for on that day of all days the fact of separation is borne in upon them most heavily. "After this year I trust to be with you at Christmas." How little they knew, and how good they did not know, that once and once only during nineteen years will he eat Christmas dinner with his family. Every year he plans to get home, and every year duty imperatively forbids his indulging his desire. So a letter, and always a telegram, will need to bring the Christmas greetings to wife and children year after year.

Early in March he is touring the East in the interests of the Church and Manse Building Fund, in which business he will persist till the meeting of the General Assembly. To that Assembly he presents his first report as Superintendent of Missions. That report goes far to settle the mind of the Church as to the wisdom of its action in making appointment of a Superintendent of Missions. The report does more. It impresses upon the Church the fact that henceforth, and for some years, there must be serious reckoning with the mission field lying beyond the Lakes. There is something doing in that country, and the Church would do well to take heed thereof. Those buckboard journeys of the Superintendent have been productive of valuable discoveries, 1,000 families, for instance, 900 Presbyterian young men and young women, mostly young men, 900 members in full communion, all of whom, till the Superintendent found them, had escaped the observation of the Church. More than this, the report awakened suspicion that there were still many undiscovered in the byways of the new land. But something had been accomplished for the shepherding of these. No fewer than forty new stations had been planted upon the prairie, and fourteen new congregations had been settled, while, to use his own great phrase, "visibility and permanence" had been given to the cause by the erection of ten new churches. Further, the report makes evident that the appointment of a Superintendent has been financially justified, for by reason of organization and good management there has accrued to the coffers of the Church a gain of $26,000 over last year, and for the Home Mission Fund alone an increase of more than what will pay the Superintendent's salary.

In that first report we catch two notes that presage a policy in mission and educational administration fraught with large advantage to the West. One, the warning that the abandoning of mission fields during the winter season means serious loss to the Church; the other, the suggestion that for the adequate supply of missionaries for the West there must one day be a Western Theological College. In this warning and in this suggestion we have the germs of the Summer Session, and of the Theological Department of Manitoba College.

But wonderful as had been the development of the country and the expansion of Home Mission operations during the year 1881–1882, when the Superintendent met the General Assembly of 1883 he had a story to tell that made that venerable body sit wide awake. This report for 1883 is perhaps in some senses the greatest paper ever presented to the Presbyterian Church in Canada. It is a striking presentation of startling and inspiring facts and is a masterpiece of logical and incisive reasoning, and it is worthy of a permanent place in the story of the making of Western Canada. It is the statement, not of a churchman alone interested in the progress of his peculiar denomination. True, he is an official of the Presbyterian Church, but he is more ; he is a Canadian, loyal, devoted to his country's good, and enthusiastically optimistic for the West and pledged to its development. He is a statesman with a statesman's eye for strategic moments in the national life. He is a man of affairs with instincts for financial returns. But, more than all, he is a man with human sympathies, keenly alive to the trials and struggles of men and women fighting their long lonely fight as pioneers in a new land. The report is worth reading. Here, for instance, is a picture of the West striding on to greatness :

"Last year witnessed a greater advance in the work of our Church in the Northwest than any previous year in its history. The construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway has given a great impetus to settlement. Large numbers of men find employment in building the road and in procuring ties and timber. The railway affords to settlers a quick and easy method of reaching the fertile lands of the interior, and provides a market for the products of the soil. The Government Railway and Land Companies have also succeeded in directing a considerable portion of the stream of emigration, from Great Britain and the continent of Europe, to the Northwest. Few are aware of how rapidly the country is being settled. Nearly 450 miles of the main line were graded and ironed last season. For 300 miles west of Brandon the road lies through a continuous stretch of good agricultural land. For twelve or fifteen miles on both sides of the line the even numbered sections have been preëmpted, or entered as homesteads. The railway company, owing to its liberal terms, has also disposed of a good deal of its land contiguous to the line. Large settlements are also found along the left bank of the Qu'Appelle and the right bank of the South Saskatchewan. Southwestern Manitoba has attracted a large number of immigrants, and they have passed westward over the boundary line into the new Province of Assiniboia. For 125 miles west of the Turtle Mountain there is now a continuous settlement. It would be within the mark to say that between eighty and one hundred townships, of thirty-six square miles each, were settled in this quarter alone during the year. In other words, there were two belts settled last season, the one along the railway west of Brandon, about 300 miles in length (as far as from Toronto to Montreal), and from twenty-five to fifty in width; and the other in Southwestern Manitoba, 125 miles in length, and from eighteen to twenty-five miles wide."

And who in all Canada was aware of all this taking place? And who would look for such facts in a Church report? The report proceeds: "Much land in the eastern parts of the country, which had been passed over by the fastidious settlers of a few years ago, was also taken up. Settlement is also stretching northward, from Fort Qu'Appelle towards Prince Albert, a number of families having found a home last year in the neighbourhood of the Touchwood Hills. Along the railway, towns and villages are fast springing up, which will soon become important centres of trade. Two years ago, in Brandon there was not a house; now there is a town of 4,000 souls. Steps are taken everywhere to effect municipal organization, and to provide schools and the other requisites of civilized life."

He can speak with authority, for well does he know every municipality. He has driven through them all in his buckboard or cutter. Then like a knife-thrust he pierces the conscience of his Church with this pertinent question, "What is to be done for the spiritual welfare of such centres?" That question he will continue to press, now in one form and now in another, till the Church will take heed. Then, remembering he is addressing himself especially to Presbyterians, he gives them this as food for thought:

"The volume of immigration last season was estimated at between 45,000 and 50,000. As in the past, the newcomers were largely members and adherents of our own Church. The arrivals from England and Scotland were more numerous than in any previous year. They express themselves as pleased with the country and their prospects, and are inviting their relatives and acquaintances to join them. Through the influence of our present population we may confidently expect that for years to come immigration from Ontario and Britain will be largely of the religious complexion of past years. The Presbyterian Church, therefore, should regard as settled the fact that upon her falls largely the responsibility of giving the Gospel to this incoming population."

"Responsibility," that is the word for a Church with a conscience towards God in regard to the country in which by His eternal decree she finds herself placed. She has been attempting to meet this responsibility, and with some success. But the report goes on: "Only occasional supply could be given west of Brandon during the autumn and winter. There were nearly 400 townships in which were to be found thousands of Presbyterians to whom no minister of our Church broke the Bread of Life. During the last six months there were extensive districts in which no minister of any Church conducted religious services." And then follows this pregnant word: "If Christian effort is thus stinted in the infancy of the country, permanent injury will be inflicted."

The problem of mission work in the West is, in the last analysis, a problem of men. Given a sufficient number of missionaries and of the right stamp, and the highest interests of the country will be secure. But not every man will do. So the Superintendent has discovered.

"The minister that will attract and hold these people must commend himself to them as a man and a Christian. With them the office and denomination will avail little; but personal character and pulpit-power much. The lame in intellect, or the limping in education, will have a thin audience." Good men they must be, but they must be well cared for. Hence salaries must be adequate and homes provided. "No Church can afford to starve its pioneers." But though the supply of labourers has been wofully inadequate, the progress of the work has not been inconsiderable. Whereas in 1882 there was reported a gain of forty stations, this year the gain is fifty-one, and fourteen congregations have erected church buildings.

The Superintendent always has an eye to the hard-headed Scots that form the majority of the business men of his Church, and to whom he well knows he must look for the financial support of this great work, and, therefore, he is at pains to make it clear that this Home Mission business is a paying investment. And hence, the report calls attention to the fact that there has been a gain throughout the Presbytery in contributions for the support of the ministry of over $12,000, in contributions for the schemes of the Church, a gain of nearly $2,500 and for all purposes a gain of nearly $40,000. This astonishing result will be in the Superintendent's hands a mighty lever for the prying open of the money chests of these same business men.

The report closes with an exhaustive estimate of the undeveloped resources of the country in agricultural products, cattle and horses, coal and other minerals.

The final words of this report constitute this noble appeal:

"The next few years are to decide largely the religious future of this country. God is calling on us to go in and possess the land. The success vouchsafed to us in the past, the possibilities of the country and the religious wants of its people, should stimulate us, as patriots, as men and Christians, to accomplish what God has given us to do. May God grant that we may discern the signs of the times and in His strength go forward."

The effect upon the Assembly of this great report and of the modest but great speech of the Superintendent is remembered yet by many who were present that day. In that brief hour, it is safe to say, the Church passed into a distinctly new era of Home Mission work. She began to realize somewhat dimly, it is true, that the day of small things had gone, that the time for large measures had come.

It was this Assembly of 1883 that, in response to an overture from Manitoba Presbytery, instituted a Theological Faculty in Manitoba College, and appointed as Principal and Professor in Divinity, one of her most distinguished ministers, holding one of the most important charges in the Church.

Seldom has the wisdom of the General Assembly been more signally manifested than in the choice of the Rev. J. M. King, at that time minister of St. James' Square Church, Toronto, to be Principal of Manitoba College. In a time of serious financial depression throughout the Province, and with the College almost hopelessly in debt, he took charge of its affairs, and before many years had passed was able to report the College free of debt, with its building doubled in size, and with an endowment fund of very considerable magnitude. From the time of his appointment till his death, Manitoba College ranked easily first among the educational institutions in the West.

In the promoting of the overture in Presbytery, and in supporting it before the Assembly, the Superintendent took a leading part. None saw more clearly than he that the moral and intellectual future of the West was bound up with the establishing and equipping of adequate institutions of learning. Throughout its whole history, the Superintendent was a warm friend of the College, and between the Principal and himself there remained unbroken to the end a bond of mutual affection and respect. Their spheres, though distinct, included much common ground, for the progress of the one involved that of the other, and though each of these strong men pushed his own special work with all the intensity of his nature, they each recognized that ultimately the aim of both was the same, namely, the moral and spiritual elevation of Western Canada. There was no more enthusiastic champion of Home Missions than Principal King, and no more staunch friend of the College than the Superintendent of Missions, though the Principal was heard to aver with that grim humour that was his own, "The Superintendent preaches on Manitoba College and takes up a collection for Home Missions."

It was this year, too, that the Manitoba Presbytery presented a memorial to the Assembly praying for the division of the Presbytery into three, and setting forth at length the arrangement desired, with reasons therefor. The Assembly appointed a special committee to deal with the memorial, which committee suggested that the matter be referred to the Assembly's Home Mission Committee.

XXIV

FIVE GREAT YEARS—II

IMMEDIATELY after the rising of Assembly the Superintendent paid a short visit to his family, but even these few days were filled up with interviews, correspondence, and meetings, and in a very few weeks he was once more on the Western trails.

Settlement had been rapidly extending during the summer in the country lying north and west, towards Prince Albert and Battleford. And, indeed, far beyond that outpost, on the way towards Edmonton, settlers had planted their homes upon the wide and trackless prairie. Hence they must be followed and cared for. From a point fifteen miles north of Fort Qu'Appelle on his way to Prince Albert, in company with the Rev. Mr. McWilliams, who is to be installed as minister of that field, the Superintendent writes to his wife under date, September 25th, 1883, giving the following description of the country through which he is passing:

"The country south of the Qu'Appelle Valley, *i. e.*, between Qu'Appelle Station and Fort Qu'Appelle, is rolling, with a few bushes and pond holes. Owing to the dry weather these are dry. There were but few settlers' houses to be seen, and only two or three patches of grain broke the monotony of the unreclaimed waste. I understand that a company owns much of the land, and if so, it is evident that these companies are proving a curse and not a blessing—hindering rather than helping settlement." He is somewhat before his time. Not yet have the people of Canada come to the determination that the lands of the Dominion shall be held or sold for the good of the Dominion and its people, and not for that of any company or corporation soever. "Fort Qu'Appelle is as attractive as ever. It lies in the valley at the east end of a lake, with the Qu'Appelle River flowing past. To the east, within a mile, another lake gleams in the sun. To the north the brown hills, deeply furrowed, look down upon it, with a few whitewashed, thatch-covered buildings used by the mounted police as barracks nestling at their foot. On the south rise the banks, as on the north, to a height of about three hundred feet, but their face is softened with clumps of poplar that now are yellow and rich. Through the valley, which is about a mile wide, are scattered houses that were and are used as private residences, stores, stopping-places, and stables. The Hudson's Bay Fort is like the majority of their buildings, and with a stockade which is no longer kept in repair. The town itself has grown a good deal since I saw it last year. There are several good buildings, and more are in course of erection. One large hotel is being built." This was one of the new fields erected the year before, and the Superintendent is pleased to note the good work done. "Mr. Brown, our missionary in the district, held services here last summer, occupying some five other posts besides this. The place of meeting is a hall built by Mr. Arch. McDonald. This hall is used for public gatherings of all kinds, whether social, political, or religious. The company owning it charge $2 per Sabbath for the use of it. No doubt this will give fair interest on the capital! . . . On inquiring, we found that a good deal of land is settled upon, and Mr. McDonald of Fort Qu'Appelle informed us that within twenty miles of the Fort scarcely a good section of Government land was unallotted. The settlers are principally Canadian, although there is a sprinkling of French half-breeds, and English and Scotch. Mr. Brown was the only missionary of any Church that held services here, and his work was very much appreciated.'' But there can be no delay. They must make Prince Albert as soon as possible, for Mr. Sieveright, the minister in charge, is anxious to leave the field, so on they go. "To-morrow we drive forty-five miles and stop, they say, at Touchwood Hills. We have a bed here to-night, and will have a house for shelter every night but one, when we must be content with a small tent. Provisions we carry with us, including a boiled ham. Canned meats and biscuit constitute the staple of our fare. I will try and send you a note to-morrow. Waggons and carts go down all the time and I may be able to get a letter sent. Telegraph line goes all the way to Humboldt.''

The following day he writes from Touchwood Hills, giving a vivid picture of his experience on the trails:

"Another day's journey is over, and we have just disposed of our supper and are at leisure for a short time. The Hudson's Bay post is within half a mile of us, and I propose to go down and hold a service there this evening.'' Let the others stretch their weary limbs in rest. This man has a message in his heart for these men of the far-away plains of Canada, and he is, indeed, straitened till it be delivered. "The day was dry, but somewhat cold. In the morning there was a frost that would indicate that the thermometer had fallen as low as twenty-five or twenty-six degrees. It was quite misty at the start, but a breeze began to blow about eight o'clock and the mist cleared away. We drove twenty-two or twenty-three miles and had dinner. This distance we travelled in about four hours, leaving O'Brien's at six and making our stopping-place at ten. There was a house, but McLean forgot the key and we could not get in. We kindled a fire outside and boiled the kettle and had dinner

—bread, canned tongue, butter, and tea. We all relished our meal after our morning drive. The fire we had to watch carefully to prevent spreading, and as soon as the kettle was boiled we drowned out the fire. Tea was black and strong, and our tin, being without a lid, we got a good infusion of ashes and smoke. . . . Late in the afternoon we passed at the Touchwood Hills quite a number of teepees and several half-breed houses. The latter had patches of grain, and much of it was still in the field. The weather is dry, however, and no doubt all will be safely stacked. The land at Touchwood is hilly, but the soil is good, and no doubt in a short time will be settled. We arrived here at five o'clock, making the twenty-two or twenty-three miles this afternoon in five hours. To-morrow we are at Salt Plains."

The next day he makes some twenty-five miles, and camps at night in an old shack, none too comfortable.

"To-night we are to lodge in a place 7x12, partitioned off from the stable. A lot of hay covers the floor, a rusty stove is standing in the corner, which, with a rickety table, constitute the furniture. We found a lantern which will answer for a light. The side is quite airy, the boards having shrunk a good deal. But I have a good tuque, or nightcap, and I hope to keep warm enough. I have two buffalo robes, two pairs of blankets, and other appliances that will likely keep me comfortable. Three teams besides our own drove in here just now and are going to remain all night. I think the room will afford sufficient accommodation to enable us to lie down. To-morrow we expect to make Humboldt at six."

A letter written the following day gives an account of his night's experience :

"Last night our quarters were humble enough. Seven of us lay side by side in the shanty, and the open spaces let in a good deal of cold. Some of our company were great snorers, the horses were pawing and coughing, and Mr. McWilliams, I fear, slept but little. The frost was decidedly sharp when we got up. Breakfasted before daylight and got a good start before sunrise. The road this morning for nearly twenty miles lay along the Salt Plain, when we struck higher land and timber. The day is clear and bright, and travelling comfortable. But dinner is ready—things are primitive and plain—and I must go to work and do justice to my share. The plates of the rest of our company, and cups, were left behind, and Mr. McWilliams and myself eat off the same plate and drink out of the same cup!"

At this point he meets Sieveright and pumps him dry in regard to his mission field. In due time, the Superintendent reaches Prince Albert, spends a couple of days there getting Mr. McWilliams settled in his charge, perfecting the organization of the congregation, and making acquaintance with the Presbyterians in the village and the surrounding country; then once more he takes the trail to Battleford. The genial days of September are gone, the nights are sharp with frost, and occasionally the ground is covered with snow, but he makes light of all discomfort and writes from Battleford, under date Oct. 12, 1883, in the following buoyant strain:

"MY DEAR WIFE:—

"I have just called at the post-office and find that a mail goes out in a few minutes, and hence write you a note. We left Prince Albert on Tuesday and got to Carlton that night. Next morning the ground was covered with snow, but we got off betimes and reached the Elbow (forty miles) after dark. Camped beside a willow bush—no trees. Cleared the snow off and spread my oilcloth and made a bed in the corner of our tent. We got some dry willow and got a fire made and had a good warm supper. Went to bed and slept soundly. Got off the next morning in good time, and were going through a country overrun with fire. Found it hard to get wood and water. Camped beside a low swail. It was empty of water, but we got grass for the horses. I gathered some snow to make tea (snow nearly all gone), and got a few willow bushes to make fire. Had a good dinner and started off again, to pass over a rough hilly country with a few creeks running into the Saskatchewan. (You can follow our course by the line of railway adopted in McKenzie's time along the North Saskatchewan.) Camped at night after going about thirty-five miles, and got two old telegraph poles to make fire of. Yesterday, we passed over a rough country, but it was well watered and had plenty of timber. We got here last night, and I paid the man off ($45 he charged) and got lodgings with Mr. McKay, of the Hudson's Bay Company. I have been trying to hunt up the Presbyterians here and have been partially successful. I think we must send a man in here to look after them."

He has been only a few hours in the place after two months' journey, but he takes no time for rest and recuperation, but at once sets out to "hunt up Presbyterians," for Presbyterians he must have at all costs, and that is why he gets them. He plans to extend his trip to Edmonton, nearly 300 miles away. Ever since his appointment he has had it in mind to visit that far outpost, but for two years, to his great regret and to the great disappointment of the missionary in charge, he has been forced to defer his trip. Now that Edmonton is *only* 300 miles away, the weather fine, the roads excellent, and he himself in fine fettle, he resolves to essay the journey, and to the great joy of the missionary at that point, after a week's hard drive he safely arrives, completing a trip of some 1,200 miles.

His visit to Edmonton proved a great stimulus to the missionary and the little congregation. Two days he spent organizing the finances of the congregation, visiting the different stations in connection with the field, and then bidding farewell to this brave missionary, A. B. Baird, and his gallant little company, he takes his homeward journey, leaving both missionary and people greatly encouraged and much fitter for their winter's work.

The experiences of the Superintendent on this north trip give tone and colour to his report to the Assembly of 1884. Remarkable as was the growth of the previous year, the expansion of this year was even more extraordinary. The report for 1882 showed forty new fields, that for 1883 showed fifty-one new fields, but this year the Superintendent is able to report the opening up of seventy new fields. Between Winnipeg and Edmonton these fields lie scattered, with great empty spaces between, but organization has been effected, often the merest skeletons of congregations, it is true, at these seventy points. And with the growth of settlement the intervening spaces will be filled up and the skeletons be rounded out into full-grown, vigorous congregations.

Through the eyes of the Superintendent, the Assembly begins to get visions of these vast prairie reaches, and of their possibilities for good to Canada and to the Kingdom of God therein, and is, therefore, the more easily persuaded to plan largely for Western work. It is no wonder that the Assembly, reversing the report of its Home Mission Committee and in response to the prayer of the Presbytery of Manitoba, agrees that that Presbytery should be divided into three, to be called Winnipeg, Rock Lake and Brandon, and that these Presbyteries should be erected into the first Western Synod under the name of the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. It is interesting to read in the minutes of that Assembly the terms in which are described the boundaries of the Presbytery at Brandon, that lying farthest to the West:

"Presbytery of Brandon.—The Presbytery of Brandon shall embrace the portions of the Province of Manitoba not included in the preceding Presbyteries, and the Northwest Territories, and shall include the following congregations and mission stations, and such others as may hereafter be erected within its bounds."

The list of fields in this most Western Presbytery is also illuminating and is quite worthy of record:

1.	High Bluff,	and	Associated	Stations
2.	Portage la Prairie,	"	"	"
3.	Gladstone,	"	"	"
4.	Neepawa,	"	"	"
5.	Minnedosa,	"	"	"
6.	Rapid City,	"	"	"
7.	Brandon,	"	"	"
8.	Burnside,	"	"	"
9.	McGregor,	"	"	"
10.	Carberry Petrel,	"	"	"
11.	Chater,	"	"	"
12.	Rosedale,	"	"	"
13.	Milford,	"	"	"
14.	Oak Lake,	"	"	"
15.	Virden,	"	"	"
16.	Cypress River,	"	"	"
17.	Auburn,	"	"	"
18.	Cadurcis and McTavish,	"	"	"
19.	Rolling River,	"	"	"
20.	Souris,	"	"	"
21.	Moosomin,	"	"	"
22.	Strathclair,	"	"	"
23.	Birtle,	"	"	"

24. Binscarth, and Associated Stations
25. Shell River, " " "
26. Beulah, " " "
27. Broadview, " " "
28. Grenfell, " " "
29. Indian Head, " " "
30. Fort Qu'Appelle, " " "
31. Touchwood Hills, " " "
32. Regina, " " "
33. Moosejaw, " " "
34. Medicine Hat, " " "
35. Calgary and Fort McLeod,
36. Edmonton,
37. Battleford,
38. Prince Albert,
39. Carrot River,
40. Whitewood, etc.,
41. Oakwood, etc.,
42. Dumfries, etc.,
43. South Moose Mountain,
44. Mistawasis Reserve,
45. Okanase,
46. Crowstand,
47. Sioux Reserve.

It is further ordered that the name of the Superintendent shall be placed on the roll of the Presbytery of Brandon, and that his relations to that Presbytery are to be the same as formerly to the Presbytery of Manitoba.

Before the Assembly rises, it signalizes its approval of the Superintendent of Missions and its appreciation of the work he is doing by accepting the recommendation of the Home Mission Committee to increase his salary to the sum of $2,000, this being the figure to which that of the Professors of Manitoba College had recently been raised.

The history of the next three years is one full of inspiration and romantic interest. From year to year the settlement of the country proceeds with greater or less rapidity, and with the growth of settlement there marches the expansion of mission work. Farther and ever farther the Superintendent pushes back the limits of his great mission field. Week after week, month after month, both summer and winter, when he is not engaged in the arduous and difficult task of extracting revenue from willing and unwilling members of the Church in the East, he presses his tireless journeys over the prairies by railroad which now traverses the field from east to west, but mostly by trail, returning from each journey with some names to add to the rapidly growing roster of his mission fields, and with his black note-book as well as his heart and head crammed with additional facts wherewith to quicken the enthusiasm of his Church and to deepen her sense of responsibility for the new Empire so rapidly building in the western half of the Dominion.

In the General Assembly of 1885, on overture from six Ontario Presbyteries and from the Presbytery of Brandon in the West, the first suggestion of a Summer Session in one of the colleges is made. This overture the Superintendent strongly supports. The proposal is remitted to the favourable consideration of the Presbyterian College of Halifax, which college, however, in the following year declines to consider the proposal to change the time of its theological session from the winter to the summer months. And so the Superintendent must struggle on, doing what he can to man his fields, gathering such recruits as offer from the Old Land and from the United States.

An overture from the Presbytery of Brandon transmitted with the approval of the Synod, results in the erection of the new Presbytery of Regina. The decision of Assembly is given in the following terms:

"That the prayer of the petition of Brandon Presbytery, as transmitted through the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, be granted, and a new Presbytery erected; that its extreme eastern boundary be the western provincial boundary line of the Province of Manitoba, and that it consist of the following congregations and Mission stations: Alameda, Battleford, Broadview, Calgary, Carlisle, Carrot River, Cathcart, Cut Arm Creek, Dumfries, Edmonton, Fort McLeod, Fort Qu'Appelle, Fort Saskatchewan, Green Valley, Grenfell, Indian Head, Jumping Creek, Long Lake, Medicine Hat, Moosomin, Moosejaw, Pine Creek, Prince Albert, Qu'Appelle Station, Regina, Southworth, Moose Mountain, Touchwood Hills, Whitewood, Wolseley, Yorkton, Broadview Reserve, Crowstand, Mistawasis Reserve; that the name of the Presbytery be *Regina*, that the Rev. P. S. Livingstone be the first Moderator, and that it hold its first meeting at Regina, in the church there, on the 15th day of July, 1885, at eleven o'clock."

The newly erected Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories in 1885, at its second meeting, honours the Superintendent and itself by choosing him to be its first elected Moderator. It is the year of the second rebellion. The following letter to his wife is interesting as furnishing contemporary opinion upon that unhappy affair:

"Mr. Pitblado, I think I told you in my last, I went with the Halifax Battalion. Mr. Gordon went off to the front with the Ninetieth. I presume he is with the troops before now on the South Saskatchewan. There has been no further conflict there since the affair of Fish Creek. Middleton has been inactive, why, I do not know. Some say that he had neither the men nor the ammunition he required. If not, he was much to blame. He had plenty of time, and why he does not push on I do not know. Every day he delays is giving the Indians time to organize and rise, because they think Middleton has been checked if not defeated. To us the whole affair seems a puzzle. There has been mismanagement from the outset. I wonder when it will end. To-day tidings came from Battleford that Colonel Otter had an engagement with the Indians on Poundmaker's Reserve. Eight of our troops were reported killed and double that number wounded. Had there been any despatch in sending troops up there first, an outbreak at Battleford might have been averted. It is becoming clear that the men who are managing this whole affair are not equal to the task. Herchmer and Otter will put Poundmaker and his band down, but I fear more blood will be spilt yet, and blood spilt now may mean more hereafter. The quelling of the rebellion will not restore the confidence nor secure the feeling of safety that existed before. You speak of this growing to larger proportions than I thought. Consul Taylor told me last week that his opinions were exactly mine—and he should be a good judge—and that if the Government had taken hold of the matter promptly, the end would have been reached long ago. Mr. Gordon and a host of the best men here are holding the same views. A fire may be a small affair and easily put out, but let it alone with a lot of inflammable matter around, and it may take a good deal to cope with it. So it was here. The dilatoriness of the Government encouraged Indian and half-breed to rebel or continue in his rebellion."

By this rebellion the attention of the whole country is centred upon the Indian and half-breed population of the West; there is a quickened sense of responsibility to these people, and, in consequence, the Synod is aggressively Foreign Mission in its spirit and legislation. But in spite of this, and perhaps, indeed, because of this, the Superintendent on leaving the Moderator's chair to present his report, rouses the Synod to a point of enthusiasm rarely surpassed in all its subsequent history.

Right there on the Western field and speaking to Western men from whose eyes experience had torn the glamour which distance and unfamiliarity often lend to stern realism, he told them of their own work, showed it to them in its true perspective, related each little patch of the field to the great whole, threw upon it the golden colours of the glowing future till as they looked and listened, they were ready to toil and suffer without murmur or hope of reprieve for the sheer glory of the work itself, and for His glory whom they had pledged themselves to serve. It was a triumph, indeed. No man present at that Synod meeting of 1885 will ever forget that speech and its effect upon the toil-worn, sun-baked group of missionaries who had travelled from ten to well-nigh ten hundred miles to be present.

In the autumn of that year the Superintendent prosecutes two extended tours, one through Southwestern Manitoba and far south and west beyond the boundaries of the Province, the other through the ranching country of Southern Alberta. During the first tour he writes to his wife the following characteristic letter, under date, Virden, August 13, 1885:

"MY DEAR WIFE: —

"Yesterday I returned from the Moose Mountain country where I had gone to open two churches. One of them was not finished and was not opened, the other was finished and opened. I drove on Saturday sixty-five miles, and on Sabbath morning to the finished church, twenty miles. I rarely saw a finer stretch of country than lies south of the Moose Mountain. We have a healthy cause there, although it is not strong. Coming back, I stopped at Green Valley and attended to work there. Found that some of the people had suffered much through hail. Some sixteen families of crofters lost a good deal.

I did what I could to encourage and cheer them. We are thinking of building two churches among these people. The missionary in Green Valley is a green Glasgow man. I wish Jamesy was out here to teach him how to harness and drive a horse, and how to ride one. He got an Indian pony and he (the pony) completely mastered him (the missionary) so that he (the missionary) had to sell him (the pony). I am almost afraid the second one will do the same. He has rather contracted ideas, too, about work, and so I have had to give him a few hints. He thought a minister's duty was to preach the Gospel and not to be bothered with horses. I had to tell him that if he could not reach the people to whom he preached without a horse, then he must learn to drive and ride—in fact, that if these were his ideas he had no business in the Northwest—that I would far rather have a man know less Latin and more Horse, and that without some knowledge of horses a man was useless. The man looked amazed, but took all well and is going to work.

"Had the misfortune to break my buggy spring and mended it *on Sunday morning on the road* with a halter strap.

"Moosomin was reached yesterday and I found a sale of cavalry horses going on. It was interesting to see a large number of scouts in the late campaign buying their old horses and taking them home. But I am going away across the river to a meeting. I got here this morning and have a meeting to-night. Elders are to be ordained and inducted."

From Fort McLeod he writes on his second tour a letter, the facts contained in which he afterwards made public. The publication of these facts awakened a feeling of horror and shame throughout the whole country and determined the Church to establish at McLeod at all costs a permanent mission. For this mission an elder in the city of Ottawa, burning with indignant grief and shame over the horrible revelations, offered $600 for two years.

The following year the Assembly adds a further name to the list of its Presbyteries, in the erection of the Presbytery of Columbia, which is made to include all congregations and mission stations in British Columbia, and which is connected with the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, though it does not as yet come under the Superintendent's jurisdiction.

The report presented by the Superintendent in 1886 showed that in spite of the rebellion of the year before and of the continued financial depression, there had been steady progress made during the year. The number of stations had gone up from 318 to 351, a gain of thirty-three ; the number of communicants from 4,457 to 4,769, a gain of 312. In regard to this matter of communicants, the Superintendent sounds this warning note :

"It will be noticed that there are not as many communicants as families. Of the young men coming to us, not fifteen per cent. ever made a profession of faith. There is a source of danger here should there be neglect."

There is, however, a very cheering fact to record in regard to the supply of fields. The Church is evidently beginning to take heed, for the report says :

"During the past summer not a settlement of any size in the country was left unprovided with ordinances. Efforts were also put forth to furnish supply during the winter, and with a good deal of success. There was not a point along the lines of railway which was left unsupplied, and districts removed from the railway had at least partial supply. When no other missionaries were available, catechists were secured for six months, and students of Manitoba College were employed during the Christmas holidays."

The Superintendent seizes the opportunity furnished by the taking of the Dominion Census to indulge his *penchant* for statistics, and presents to the Assembly certain valuable and inspiring information, with his reflections thereupon. Among other facts he notices that out of a total population for the Territories of 48,362, there are 23,344 whites, and of this number 7,712 are Presbyterians. He thus estimates that the Presbyterians form over thirty per cent. of the population of these Territories, as they form over forty per cent. of the population in Manitoba. This fact he uses to lay heavier the weight of responsibility for the people of the West, upon the conscience of the Presbyterian Church.

Towards the end of that year, the Superintendent makes a swift dash into British Columbia, stirring up the people wherever he can pause, to organization and self-support. From Donald, the most ambitious and most ungodly town in British Columbia at that time, he writes:

"I spent the day at Donald trying to do two things—to get a church building under way, and to get support for a minister. I got $600 promised for the minister and got arrangements made to have the church built, $700 being subscribed in cash and 14,000 feet of lumber."

The General Assembly for 1887 met in the city of Winnipeg, a significant testimony to the importance which the Western metropolis had assumed in the opinion of the Church. It is a Home Mission Assembly, and the minds of the fathers and brethren are largely occupied with the expansion of their Western heritage. In the minutes of that Assembly is found the following very significant paragraph:

"On motion of Mr. James Robertson, seconded by Mr. James Herdman, the following resolution was adopted,—That the prayer of the Presbytery of Regina be granted, that the General Assembly hereby erects a new Presbytery to be bounded as follows:" And then the resolution proceeds to describe the boundaries of the new Presbytery by lines truly majestic in their sweep: "The eastern limit of said Presbytery shall be the one hundred and ninth degree of longitude; the southern limit the forty-ninth parallel of latitude; the western limit, a line passing north and south through the western crossing of the Columbia River by the Canadian Pacific Railway; the northern limit, the Arctic Sea."

In what magnificent terms these men conceived their work! Here are the names of the fields constituting this, the greatest Presbytery the world has ever seen: Indian Head, Lethbridge, Fort McLeod, High River, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Red Deer, Cochrane, Banff, Anthracite, Donald, and Revelstoke. And here are the names of the men to whose care this stupendous Presbytery is entrusted: Messrs. James Herald, Charles McKillop, Richard Campbell Tibb, Angus Robertson, James C. Herdman, Andrew Browning Baird, Alexander H. Cameron. By the appointment of Assembly the first meeting of this great Presbytery is to be held on the third Tuesday of July, 1887, and of this Presbytery the first Moderator is to be Angus Robertson, well known and greatly loved by all who toiled with him as a Western missionary during his all too brief life.

By this Assembly, also, the eastern boundaries of the Presbytery of Winnipeg are extended to White River, a point 248 miles east of Port Arthur, the former boundary.

To this Assembly the Superintendent presents a brief report of the work accomplished during the five years that have just passed. It is characteristic of the report that there is absolutely no hint or suggestion of the toils and tribulations, of the perils and privations, that he has endured, to whom, under God, the great results achieved have been largely due. It is a record of truly magnificent progress, and of startling achievement. When he came to his work as Superintendent, he found 116 Mission stations scattered throughout Manitoba and the neighbouring parts of the Territories. His first report gave the names of 129 fields lying, for the most part, within a radius of about 200 miles of Winnipeg, isolated from each other, unknown to the Church, uncared for in any adequate manner, financially hopeless, and provided only with supply of the most spasmodic kind. Beyond these 129 fields lay new settlements without missionary or Church services, and over the whole West were hundreds and thousands of undiscovered Presbyterians.

In five years what a change! Instead of 129 stations there are reported 389, a growth of 260, fifty-two for every year, one for every week of that period, and almost every station the result of a personal visit of the Superintendent, and in almost every case of his personal organization. His first report showed a communicant roll of 1,355 for all the West; the report for 1887 showed 5,623. When he came to his field the Presbytery of Manitoba had knowledge of only 971 families. In a single year he discovered 1,000 more and placed these formerly unknown and isolated families into Church homes, and during the five years he discovered and set in Church relation over 3,000 Presbyterian families. When he took into his hands the reins of superintendency, he found in all the West some fifteen churches. Before five years were over there were nearly 100, and these the result largely of the help given by the Church and Manse Building Fund, whose creator he practically was.

In Eastern Canada the results achieved were no less extraordinary. In 1882, the Western Missions were practically unknown to the Church in the East. The Home Mission cause held an insignificant place in the mind of the Church, the appeal for funds brought very inadequate response. But before five years had passed, by his reports, his speeches, his sermons and addresses, the Superintendent had made the West visible, and brought it near. More than that, becoming visible and real to the Church in Eastern Canada, the West and its marvellous mission work acted as a magnet for the unifying of the different parts and varied elements of the Church in the East. Home Missions began to bulk large and the Church awakened to a new self-consciousness by reason of this great mission enterprise she was carrying on in Western Canada. In short, by the work of these five years the straggling, scattered missions in Western Canada, the disintegrated and isolated fragments of a Church, unknown to each other and to the Church as a whole, were organized into one body whose members fitly framed and compactly joined together by that which every joint supplied, began to grow with a common life into a Church pulsing with vigour, conscious of power, and alert for the mighty enterprise laid to her hand by her Lord.

The Assembly of 1887, meeting for the first time in the capital of Western Canada, received many courtesies from various public and civic bodies, but none was more appreciated than the invitation of the Canadian Pacific Railway to visit the Pacific Coast; and few greater pleasures ever came to the Superintendent during his life than that he experienced in conducting the Commissioners across the reaches of his mission field. It was from first to last an experience of wonder and delight to the whole party, and of pride and joy to the Superintendent who organized and conducted it. One incident in the journey across the plains is worth recording. It is given in the words of an eye-witness:

"I shall never forget one scene. While on the way westward, we arrived at some point where the train was to stop for some minutes, for water, I think. There was nothing but a station in sight. Being towards dusk, he proposed that the whole party should gather on the prairie during the stop, for worship. It was heartily responded to, and the words of a familiar Psalm floated on the breeze from a hundred voices, followed by a brief prayer. It was like a consecration of the boundless open space to the service of Christ, and of ourselves, as representing the Church, to its evangelization, when it should be occupied, as he believed it soon would.''

His faith in the West never faltered, and every succeeding year only served to justify it. His work through the years that followed was in detail largely a repetition of that of the five years just passed. Failure never checked him, success never sated him, but day by day and week by week until the very last, he followed the gleaming steel or the black line of the trail across the prairies and through the mountains, eager, insatiable, undaunted.

XXV

FRICTION

THE Presbyterian Church is a democratic institution and historically and sensitively loyal to two great principles in polity, one the supremacy of Presbytery, the other the parity of Presbyters. The first principle guards against the encroachment on the part of any other Church court or of any Church dignitary upon the absolute authority of Presbytery, a body which owes its existence ultimately to the will of the people. No right is more jealously guarded by Presbytery than that of absolute control over all congregations and ministers within its jurisdiction.

The principle of parity of Presbyters opposes itself to every assumption of authority on the part of any individual, no matter how richly endowed in mental and spiritual gifts or how vested with authority by virtue of office. Before the Presbytery all Presbyters stand equal, and any authority held or exercised is so held and exercised only by delegation of Presbytery.

It was inevitable that in the exercise of the functions of his office the Superintendent should come near to being wrecked upon these constitutional rocks. It was ominous of future trouble that immediately after the appointment of the Superintendent, and when the regulations governing his office were being discussed, the Rev. H. McKellar, a worthy and conscientious member of the Manitoba Presbytery, should feel it his duty to oppose with might and main the use of the word "oversight" in defining the Superintendent's duties, and should feel called upon to table his dissent against the finding of the General Assembly in this regard. To his mind "oversight" was an un-Presbyterian infringement upon the rights of Presbytery and a denial of the doctrine of the parity of Presbyters. But the word went into the regulations and the thing into the duty of the new Superintendent, and with a vengeance. For not unfrequently the Presbytery or the Home Mission Committee would find itself ignored and would be asked, with what grace it could muster, to approve, homologate, or condone some action of its Superintendent as in the following instance:

In the discharge of the duties of his office, the Superintendent happened upon a congregation which had reached such a stage of development as seemed to demand for its highest good the settlement of a pastor. The procedure in such cases is clearly defined in the Book of Forms. The Presbytery is consulted by the congregation, leave is obtained to moderate in a call, the congregational organization and standing are thereupon carefully examined, the congregation duly summoned by edict of Presbytery to exercise its right of call, and having exercised this right the Presbytery proceeds, if satisfied that the interests of all have been guarded, to sustain the call and effect a settlement. In this particular case the Superintendent finds the congregation clearly in need of a pastor, but absolutely without organization, there being not even a Communion Roll. The presence of a pastor would greatly strengthen the cause not only in that congregation, but in the whole community. Moreover, the congregation has fixed its affection—most happy circumstance—upon a certain minister who, it is believed, reciprocates this feeling. What is to be done? The proper and ordinary course is well known to the Superintendent, but there are other considerations. The Presbytery will not meet for weeks, perhaps months; the calling of a special meeting is a serious matter involving expenditure of money and time on the part of brethren who have little of either to spend. Why put the brethren to this expenditure? Why, indeed, when the Superintendent can do all that is necessary himself, and when the Presbytery will doubtless approve, homologate or condone, if need be, at its first meeting, what he does? The Superintendent assumes Presbyterial powers, issues the edict, summons the congregation, grants leave to moderate in a call, has the call issued forthwith, sustained, accepted, the minister duly settled and the whole business reported to Presbytery at its first meeting, with the suggestion that the proper and only course now open to that court is to approve, homologate or condone if need be. And this, indeed, the Presbytery perforce and very sensibly proceeds to do and then sits back to digest its surprise, horror or indignation, according to the temper or ecclesiastical training of each Presbyter concerned.

To most of the brethren the Superintendent's course appears to be the only one open to a man of earnest purpose and of common sense, and so the whole matter is accepted with a smile. But it would be strange, indeed, if some worthy brother were not found to whom the whole procedure appeared not only entirely un-Presbyterian, but also little short of sacrilege. The Superintendent, however, neither unduly affected by the deprecatory smile of approval or the upraised brow of horror, goes calmly on his way to do it again, if the exigencies of the work should demand.

But there were those in whose breasts this rough shod trampling upon the rights of Presbytery and of Presbyters rankled and who were determined that this should end. Hence, once and again the Superintendent is arraigned before the Home Mission Committee and Presbytery only to make his defence with smiling urbanity, or with hot indignation, according to the nature of the criticism, to the effect that at all costs the work must be done, with Presbytery or without Presbytery, as the case may be, and then depart to his work unrepentant, though promising to exercise all care in the future, but leaving in the minds of his fellow-Presbyters no assured confidence that such care will result in any marked change of conduct. With most of his brethren forgiveness was easy, when from his long-drawn and arduous tours the Superintendent came back to them with his marvellous reports that told only of the things accomplished, and made light of the toils endured. There were some, however, who allowed themselves to import such bitterness into their criticisms of the Superintendent and his methods in these early years, as would suggest that they were not wholly free from personal animus. The following anonymous letter which appeared in the Toronto *Mail* would seem to be the outcome of such animus. The letter has value now, as showing the atmosphere in which the Superintendent did his work, and the seriousness of the hostility he now and then encountered. The letter is a curious survival of a spirit long since dead and buried, and is as follows:

"Another matter that demands immediate attention is the abolition of that nondescript office of Superintendent now paraded in Winnipeg. For pity sake if we are to have a bishop let him be a man of education and culture, of enlarged mind and entire devotedness to his work, and not a man of very little education, of wretched pulpit ability, of abnormal sectarian bias, of little judiciousness and of less sense, who fell into this position which had been humanely provided for him before the fall, when he was kicked out of the upper windows of Knox Church of Winnipeg, to make room for a better man; who, unbishoplike, lives apart from his family with his wife's friends, while he boards like a boss-walker at Winnipeg's Queens, which grand hotel is the land bourse of the Northwest where speculators from everywhere congregate and gamble in 'Manitoba dirt.' If there must be such an office, let it be filled by a pious and laborious minister of the Gospel and not by a moneyed land-grabber who deceived the Church by his assumption of zeal and his long-winded, threadbare, harangues on the greatness and fertility of that country. Two thousand dollars a year and all his travelling expenses to and from the Northwest several times in the year should be saved to be applied in Supplementing four or five congregations in that country. How such men as the Revs. Gordon and Pitblado of Winnipeg can consent to continue such a farce, is more than I can understand. Of this I am sure, for I have heard it, that there is a wide-spread dissatisfaction throughout all that country at the career of the present incumbent of the superintendency who is only fit and infinitely fitter to 'run' a farm than to 'oversee' what in reality amounts in some degree to a bishopric.

"I call upon the enlightened Moderator of the General Assembly to stand up and utter his undisguised Scottish sentiment about this Superintendent matter. I call upon the able and pious ministers of Winnipeg to come to the fore and aid their people in that great prairie land by having immediate and liberal measures devised in their behalf. I call upon the members of the Home Mission Committee to drop at least a score of our moribund East-Oxford-like stations in Ontario and apply the money thus wasted in assisting (if only for two or three years) our Presbyterian people and their families out in the Northwest. And if in their wisdom this queer Superintendency be perpetuated or even upheld but one year more, for conscience sake appoint a man to it who will, at least to some little extent, resemble Chaucer's 'Poor Parson' supposed to refer to Wyclif:

" 'Wide was his parish and houses far asunder;
But he ne left not for ne rain, ne thunder;
In sickness and in mischief to visite
The forest in his parish moche and light
Upon his fete and in his hand a staff."
—*Prologue to Canterbury Tales.*

" 'That man is mistaken who thinks to prevail upon the world by conforming himself to its fashions and manners' (Quesnel). I would humbly add thereto 'speculations' in Northwestern lands by so-called Superintendents.

"Yours, etc.,
"*March 21, 1883.* A BLUE PRESBYTERIAN."

With this letter, however, very few if any of those most severely critical of the Superintendent and his methods would be found to sympathize. The chief effect of its publication was to elicit a storm of indignant protest against such a venomous attack. The following letter would fairly represent this general feeling of indignation:

"A letter appeared in your issue of the 23d inst. on the condition of the Church in the Northwest, to which as a member of Knox Church, Winnipeg, I beg space fo. a few words in reply.

"I shall not trouble you with any comment upon the paragraph referring to the 'fact,' which is not a fact, that there is not a settled Presbyterian minister on the C. P. R., west of Portage la Prairie. As I fail to see what connection an 'old cranky congregation' in East Oxford has with the state of the Church in the Northwest, I need notice it no further than to call attention to the animus of the writer who, if I am not mistaken, is a 'tramp of a minister' who makes the state of the Church (not that he cares for the Church) the pretext for a vile attack upon the Superintendent of Missions. Any one who has the privilege of knowing the Rev. Mr. Robertson, the Superintendent of Missions, intimately, does not need to be told that the statements respecting him are either utterly false or the cruellest misrepresentation and give expression to the bitterest malice. Far from being 'kicked out of the upper windows of Knox Church,' Mr. Robertson was never more beloved by his congregation than he was when, at the command of the General Assembly, the pastoral tie was severed.

"In proof of this, were it necessary, I might refer to the minutes of the Session of the congregation, and if 'A Blue Presbyterian' wishes to know how Mr. Robertson is still lovingly regarded by his late congregation, let him come and witness the affectionate greeting he always receives. As to Mr. Robertson's education, there is abundant evidence in the letter of 'A Blue Presbyterian' that he is not competent to judge. As to his pulpit ability, if I may be permitted to use a sporting phrase, I would say one hundred to one Mr. Robertson as against 'A Blue Presbyterian.' As to his sectarian bias, it must be 'abnormal,' for Mr. Robertson gained and retains the respect and good-will of all sects. As to his 'little judiciousness' and 'less sense,' suffice it to say that hitherto Mr. Robertson has enjoyed the confidence of the Church.

"Extreme personal dislike of Mr. Robertson, coupled with a dog-in-the-manger spirit, pervades every line of 'A Blue Presbyterian's' letter. Can it be true that in his extensive travels in 'that vast country' he was in the position of the dove which left the ark, and that all this overflow of bile is because the Superintendent did not follow the example of Noah and take him in?

"Yours, etc.,

" A MEMBER OF KNOX CHURCH.

" *Winnipeg, March 31, 1883.*"

To Mr. and Mrs. Robertson, the first letter brought the greatest pain, as is evidenced by the following letter, of date March 30th, 1883:

"I suppose you saw that letter that appeared in the *Mail* of Friday. I think it must have been that to which you referred in your letter on Monday. I never saw it till I came here. It is a most diabolical attempt to ruin my character, but I trust it will fail. The Home Mission Committee came nobly to my rescue, and I am going to see if I cannot have the matter set right here, etc. The *Mail* apologized for inserting it already. I went to see Dr. King, but he was out. This has worried me a good deal. I do not like to suspect any one. The Home Mission Committee would feel like insisting on putting any one guilty of such an action out of the Church. But I trust we shall get over all this with God's help."

The Assembly's Home Mission Committee, then convened in Toronto, deeply resented this slanderous attack upon its honoured and trusted Superintendent, and gave the matter into the hands of a Committee consisting of Dr. King, Dr. Cochrane, Messrs. Macdonnell, Farries, and McKenzie. This Committee presented the following report which was unanimously adopted:

"The Home Mission Committee having had its attention called to an anonymous communication which, as admitted by the editor, was allowed without due consideration to appear in the Toronto *Mail* of Friday, 23d of March, reflecting injuriously on the Committee's administration, and throwing very grave and slanderous aspersions on the character of the Superintendent of Missions in the Northwest, resolves as follows :

"1. That the statements contained in the letter respecting the working of the Home Mission field both in the Northwest and in Ontario, are in many particulars misleading and untruthful.

"2. That Mr. Robertson, the Superintendent of Missions, has proved himself to be an intelligent, indefatigable and self-sacrificing agent of the Church ; that during the short period in which he has filled the position, he has been singularly successful, in developing the liberality of the people in Manitoba and the Northwest, both in the support of ordinances and in the creation of a Church and Manse Building Fund ; in securing the accession to the field of valuable labourers, both ministers and students, and, generally, in promoting the rapid extension of the work therein.

"3. That the Committee has seen with pain and indignation this attempt to damage the ministerial standing and personal character of Mr. Robertson, not refraining from invading even the privacies of domestic life ; that it assures him of its deep sympathy with him under an attack at once so undeserved, so malignant, and so cowardly ; that it embraces the opportunity to express the high esteem in which its members hold him for his mental vigour, his breadth of view, his devotion to the Church's interests, and his zeal in discharging the duties of his difficult position, and to assure him of its hearty support in carrying on the work to which the highest court of the Church has called him."

Somewhat similar in spirit and even more cowardly in manner was the attack made upon the Superintendent and his administration from another quarter. With his customary vigour the Superintendent defends himself and with good effect, as appears from a letter written to his friend Professor Hart:

"From Dr. Cochrane I learned that Mr. Blank was sending down statements to him about our financial state that are absolutely false. He represented that we are $1,700 behind for the work of last summer, and, of course, he laid the blame on my shoulders. The fact is, that if the stations pay as expected, every cent will be wiped out. Our assets and amounts due from stations cover our liabilities. The Doctor kindly read letters received, that will compel me to make Mr. Blank keep a copy of all letters sent for perusal, for I find that he is a sneak and a coward, not sticking to the truth by any means in his statements. This I showed the Doctor to his satisfaction.

"The difficulty in Dr. Reid's office was no difficulty at all. Instead of our account being overdrawn, there was something coming to us. Not only so, but a check of $64 of Mr. Moodie's charged against us was paid, and $150 sent to Mr. Warden not accounted for. It likely went to pay some minister sent out permanently. The tactics of the gentleman are now known and he can be checked."

While the mission work of the West was administered by the single Presbytery of Manitoba, the Superintendent, by frequent consultation with members of his Committee, was able to prevent friction to a large extent, but after the erection of the Presbyteries of Brandon and Rock Lake and of the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, each of these three courts having its own Home Mission Committee and Home Mission Convener, the occasions of misunderstanding and the opportunities of friction were, of course, multiplied fourfold. In the disposition of men and in the payment of grants it was charged that the Synod's Home Mission Committee, and especially the Convener of that Committee, who also was the Superintendent of Missions, acted arbitrarily and without consulting the Presbytery authorities.

The irritation in the Presbyteries of Brandon and Rock Lake found expression in various appeals to the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, but at length was embodied in two overtures from these Presbyteries to the General Assembly of 1886. The General Assembly receiving the overtures, determined to get to the bottom of the difficulty. There was an uneasy feeling in the mind of the Assembly that there must be some serious cause for the discontent and the irritation that was said to be so wide-spread in the West. The overture from the Presbytery of Brandon sought relief against the method presently in vogue of distributing grants, and prayed for the abolishing of the Synod's Home Mission Committee. The overture from the Presbytery of Rock Lake prayed the General Assembly so to amend the instructions given to the Superintendent of Missions as to prevent the powers entrusted to him from conflicting with the undoubted rights and privileges of Presbyteries. The overtures were supported in the Assembly and afterwards in Committee by men, some of whom were warm personal friends and admirers of the Superintendent's who were opposed, some to the idea of a superintendency altogether, and others to the peculiar methods employed by the Superintendent and the Synod's Home Mission Committee. The fate of the overtures is told in the following extract taken from a letter written by one who took a somewhat prominent part in the settlement of the affair :

"The chief speaker in the presentation of these overtures was the Rev. James Todd, at that time minister of Burnside. Mr. Todd was strong on constitutional law and saw no place in the government of the Presbyterian Church for such a personage as a Superintendent. He has presumably changed his mind since that day, for he now occupies with credit to himself and no little usefulness to the Church, the position of Superintendent of Missions in the New England States, in the interests of the American Presbyterian Church. The debate in the Assembly was lengthy and complicated, and after three several motions had been proposed, it was agreed to refer the matter to a special Committee to be made up :

"1. Of the Home Mission Committee,

"2. Western Commissioners who were present at the Assembly, and

"3. Six members of the Assembly nominated by the Moderator. This Committee met and spent a whole evening in deliberation. Feeling, especially among the Western members, was tense, and the discussion will long linger in the minds of those who were present at it. The chief men in advocacy of the policy recommended in the overtures were, in addition to Mr. Todd, Rev. C. B. Pitblado, of St. Andrew's Church, Winnipeg, Dr. Bryce, and Mr. W. D. Russell. The leading men who advocated the maintenance of the Superintendency were Rev. D. M. Gordon, minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, Professor Hart, Messrs. Arch. McLaren of Springfield, and A. B. Baird, of Edmonton. The time of the Committee was taken up chiefly in the discussion of specific instances, showing the unsatisfactory nature of the management of Home Missions in the West. The Committee insisted that it needed such specific instances in order to judge of the merits of the case. The opponents of the Superintendency were somewhat at a loss, because as is usual in such cases, what they were able to present was in a considerable measure only hearsay evidence, about the details of which, when they were cross-examined, they were rather hazy. The gist of the charges was that the Superintendent had acted in an arbitrary way, overriding or failing to give effect to the decisions of Presbyteries, transferring men from one field to another without Presbyterial authority and such like. The feature of the evening which lingers most clearly in my mind is Dr. Robertson's defence. It was a masterpiece; he had perfect control of his temper (something which could not be said of every member of the Committee), and he had the advantage, too, of replying to charges in which he was more complete master of the facts than any one of those who brought the charges. Indeed, he, in excess of candour and with some humour, pointed out in one or two instances where the allegations against him were not as strong as they might have been made, and indicated where his fault had been greater than alleged. He took up in detail the instances brought forward, and showed that however arbitrary his conduct looked on a partial statement of the facts, when the facts were fully stated, his procedure was seen to be not only capable of defence, but the most suitable and even the inevitable course in the circumstances. The freedom from bitterness which marked his statement, the marvellous memory which kept in view the names and details of each case, the organizing faculty which made him ready, at risk to his own reputation, to make the most of every strategic situation, and his manifest devotion to his work made that evening an impression which, instead of causing the Church to mistrust him, placed him higher in her confidence than he had ever been before. The report of this Committee when it was presented to the General Assembly contained a large number of clauses dealing for the most part with the constitution and work of the Synodical Home Mission Committee. But among other things the Committee declared that 'It is undesirable to effect any change in the regulations affecting the duties of the Superintendent or his relationship to the Synod or the Presbyteries within its bounds.' And in another clause the Committee recommended to the Assembly to place on record its appreciation of the services rendered by the Superintendent of Missions 'whose labours have resulted so beneficially in the furtherance of the work of the Church in the Northwest.' "

This deliverance of the Assembly broke the back of all opposition to the Superintendency and cleared the air of all the clouds of suspicion and distrust that had hovered about the administration of Western missions. It also defined more clearly the limits within which the various committees and officials should exercise their functions, and revealed this fact, that as in so many cases the misunderstandings and difficulties that had arisen were to be traced not so much to the perversity of those engaged in the work, as to defects in the system under which the work was carried on. Henceforth the Superintendent will claim no powers but such as are delegated by Presbytery, though it is to be feared that he will continue to be what an indignant critic once called him, "a walking Presbytery himself." There will be criticism both of the man and of his methods, and there will be misunderstandings with Committees and Conveners, but the triumph of the Superintendent, both before the Committee and upon the floor of the General Assembly itself, was so complete and so conspicuous, that no one henceforth will ever venture to hale him before any Church court soever. And it is fair to say that those who opposed him that day were, for the most part, uninfluenced by personal animus, and those who continued to be co-labourers with him in Western work came to give him full confidence and affection, freely forgiving what in their judgment they could not approve as being in harmony with Presbyterian polity.

XXVI

GETTING HIS MEN

THE Superintendent's first business was to get his men, and this proved to be as difficult a task as the catching of the proverbial hare; more so, indeed, for as a rule the hare stayed caught and without further ado went duly into the soup. But the men after being caught had to be held and handled with extreme care. The sudden and wonderful expansion of missionary work between the years 1881 and 1885 created an unusual demand for missionaries, far greater than could be supplied by the graduates of our Colleges. One consequence of this inadequacy of supply was a keen competition for desirable men on the part of the various Presbyteries east and west, the principle of selection being too often every man for himself, with the result that in spite of stern regulations by the Home Mission Committee against "private arrangement," the Conveners nearest the source of supply, for obvious reasons, often fared much better than those more remote. And although the Home Mission Committee made earnest efforts to furnish the Superintendent with his full quota of men, it came to pass that when the supply was exhausted, many Western fields were still vacant.

In 1885, the situation was so serious that the Superintendent was sent to Union and Princeton Theological Seminaries in search of men. His visit to Princeton is described by one who has given long and distinguished service to the West and who still holds an honoured place in his Church.

"As I sat one evening in my room at the 'Old Seminary,' Princeton, in February, 1885, a rap was heard at the door. Thinking some friendly neighbour was coming, I roared out in student fashion, 'Come!'

"Slowly the door swung back, and there, as if waiting a more formal invitation, stood a tall, gaunt-looking stranger. I arose and assumed a civilized demeanour when the stranger advanced and, extending his hand, said, 'How do you do, sir? My name is Robertson, from the Canadian Northwest. I saw your name, sir, in the directory in the hall, and came to your room thinking there might have been an error in one of the initials. We had an R. C. Murray in our Western work last summer, who is taking a post-graduate course somewhere, and I thought possibly it might be he who roomed here.'

"To set him at his ease on the matter of intrusion, I said:

"'No, sir, I am S. C. Murray, and I am very glad to see you, Mr. Robertson. I have been reading a good deal about our Northwest, and I have thought of venturing west myself when I get through.'

"There was a sudden light in the eye as he almost greedily asked, 'Are you a Canadian?'

"'I am.'

"'When do you graduate?'

"'This year.'

"'How many Canadians have you in Princeton this year?'

"'Nineteen altogether.'

"'How many graduate?'

"'Five.'

"'Where could I see these men? I am most anxious to meet with all the Canadian students before I leave tomorrow.'

"'If you will remain here, I will go at once and ask them to meet you, and I shall be very glad to have you occupy this room this evening and to-morrow, as you may be able to arrange interviews with the fellows.'

"'Thank you, sir, very much; that is very kind of you, indeed.'

"From that time Mr. Robertson was my very warm friend, and never awaited an invitation to my home, and, no matter when he came, he was a welcome guest.

"In a short time the Canadian boys came dropping in. That evening and the next forenoon we heard of the great Canadian West, its resources, its vastness, its future. 'How about the winters?' 'How are settlers supplied with fuel?' 'How will the rebellion affect missions?' 'Do you think the country will ever be well settled?' All manner of questions were put, not forgetting 'What salary do you pay your men?' of course. I shall never forget the magnificent confidence of the man as, with one prophetic sweep, he brushed aside all the questioners' doubts by exclaiming:

"'If there is anything, young gentlemen, in Divine Providence, I cannot believe that He has locked up such vast resources as are found in the Canadian West, without intending that country to be one day well populated.'

"He dipped into the future as far as human eye could see, saw the vision of the *West* and all the wonder that would be. I had to attend lectures part of the day, but had opportunity to see a good deal of the man and hear a good deal of the West. When we were alone he said:

"'I want to tell you about my coming here. A few of us met in Toronto, and we were feeling keenly the need of men. We knelt in prayer to ask Divine guidance. Immediately upon rising, two or three of the Committee said almost simultaneously, "Mr. Robertson, go down to Union and Princeton and see what you can do." I left Toronto at once, and you know, sir, how I got to your room. And as you have been waiting for the providential guidance as to your future field, I think you should have no difficulty in settling the difficulty now.'

"And I hadn't."

The student came in July of that year, and with the West he has been identified ever since, taking his full share of the toil, exposure, and privation incident to the planting of the Western Church, and winning and holding to the very end the affection and the esteem of his great chief.

It was at the Assembly of 1885, as we have seen, that the attempt was made to establish a Summer Session in Theology in one of the colleges. But the college selected by the Assembly declined the experiment, and the Superintendent and his Committee were left to struggle as best they could with the question of supply for the Western fields.

Like other questions, the Western service could be viewed from different standpoints, with very different results. There was the view-point of the theological graduate seeking a congenial field of labour. And it would not be surprising if Ontario, offering all the comforts and congenialities, physical, literary, social, of a civilized community should make strong appeal over the remote, laborious, unbroken fields of the far West. There was the view-point also of the college professor, who, ambitious for his college and with an eye for future harvests, would prefer to sow his seed in the fertile fields of wealthy Ontario. It is not impossible to understand how he might offer such advice as one professor did to a favourite graduate. "Oh, Mr. Blank, there is surely no need for *you* to go West. You would find no difficulty in securing a good congregation in Ontario." Of course, there were other students and other professors ; students whose ears were open to the call of service without regard to place or circumstance; students to whom the call to difficulty, privation, and peril came with irresistible force, and who stood ready to follow the trail whether leading east or west. There were professors, too, who placed Church before College and who were quick to recognize the day of opportunity for the Church and for Canada.

These students and these professors were the joy of the Superintendent's heart. His view-point in regard to Western missions was very easily arrived at. The future of Canada was bound up with that of the country lying beyond the Great Lakes. The concern of the Church was that the foundations of empire in that vast land should be laid in righteousness. The rapid development of that country created immediate and pressing demand for missionary effort. Before all other fields this took preference, and for these present formative years the claims of this work upon the Canadian Church were paramount. With him it was The West, The West, and ever The West. The vastness of responsibility, the magnificence of opportunity, the urgency of need kindled in his heart a fire that never burned low, much less died out. He could never get all his fields filled, and in consequence he was always hungry for men, and the longer the list of his vacancies, the fiercer this hunger grew. From college to college he went year after year haranguing, appealing, pleading for men and with varying success.

"I am going," he writes, "to all the colleges to advocate a larger number of grads going West. We must advance in our present policy. Four or five licentiates went to Princeton this winter to take a post-graduate course, simply because not called last summer—and they will come out next spring fresh like an old maid the second term. Oh, the folly of thinking you have a call to preach, and will not hear a voice from any place but Ontario!"

In a letter to that sturdy pioneer missionary, Rev. D. G. McQueen, he says with fine irony :

"Fort Saskatchewan should have an ordained man now if possible, but men are very scarce, and our young men religiously avoid missions and augmented congregations. Providence never guides their steps to them. He seems to take charge of places with large salaries and comfortable surroundings, and missions 'and such' are left to ———. So I interpret the cant I am compelled to hear."

Successive disappointments wrought in him a distrust of the motives animating some of those studying for the Gospel ministry. To a Western Convener he allows himself to write as follows :

"Our young graduates in the East think that God calls them to places where the work is easy, the meals good and the beds soft, and that a call where work is hard and the climate severe must be from the evil one, and I fear they act on this impression."

To another he writes in a somewhat severe strain in regard to the supply for a difficult British Columbia field :

"As for Princeton, I do not think that we have got the man yet that will suit. I am afraid that the most of our men have neither grit nor leg enough to climb 5,000 feet and travel thirty-five miles in the specified time, and we don't want any Mr. F——'s to go in there. Missionary fakirs are the worst fakirs, and it would seem as if Canada was getting quite a number of them now. I think they should be left severely alone, and I am of the opinion, moreover, that some men are possessed not so much of love for mission work as of hatred for other work. These are not the men for us."

There is no doubt of that, for these are the men whose courage will break, to the ruin of the cause and the discouragement of all who labour in it. But the Superintendent has in a marked degree a saving sense of humour, and a gleam of this same grim humour of his lights up his most doleful letters.

"Men not available, and although you could make even a husky team 'get' by picturesque profanity, you cannot start an ordinary Ontario man. He simply looks at you, rubs his hands, and says, 'I think I shall stay at home this winter. I'll think about it in the spring. I hope I am not disappointing you.' Keep F—— at Beaver and M——at Leduc—better a dinner of herbs than starvation."

In the following manner he strives to bring comfort to a Western Convener sorely disappointed in the quality of the supply sent him:

"Your letters are always welcome, and there is no mistaking your fist, but you were in bad humour when you wrote the last. We could have stationed your men for you, but we did not think that quite fair, and so sent them through that you might put the big ox in the wide stall and the small one in the narrow. And, truth to tell, we took some of them because they offered for a year, on the certificate of members of the Committee; our eyes never beheld them. Faith plays a very important part in the appointments of the Committee. S—— has backed out, and R—— was sent to take his place. He is not much to look at, but he is a good one to work—so I am told. I take all responsibility for your appointments. If you get some hickory sticks and some plain basswood, people are unreasonable in supposing that you can change the inferior into the superior timber."

The Superintendent was especially critical of those who would pick and choose their spheres of labour. One year he was sorely put out by the attitude of a number of men who, finding it impossible to secure appointments to the Foreign Mission field for which they had volunteered, declined service in his beloved West.

"I pleaded the case with them," he writes, "and finally a number of them promised to lay the matter before the Lord. I told them that they need not take the trouble, for I could tell them now what the answer would be, for I had found that whenever a man proposed to ask the Lord about Western work, the Lord as a rule indicated a less laborious sphere. Indeed, if I were to judge by the experience of these men, I would be forced to believe that the Lord had a kind of grudge against the West."

He discovered a peculiarly fine vein of sarcasm in dealing with men who shrank from the hardships of missionary life and were fertile in excuse. In the following manner he writes a British Columbia Convener:

"A number of men were approached with a view to going to Horsefly, but all complained of some ailment or physical defect that seemed to incapacitate them for this field. One had something the matter with his spine, another had his back wrenched by a chair being pulled from under him at college, a third could not ride without becoming seasick, the mother of a fourth was old, the father of another delicate and he could not go away so far, while the sixth was engaged to be married and Horsefly was not a place to which to take a wife. I hope that next spring so many of the men will not offer excuses of that kind when approached."

The Superintendent used to relate with grim relish an experience with a college graduate, a young man of fine ability and of genuine missionary spirit, who, under the inspiration of one of those great addresses of the Superintendent's, offered for Western work. Greatly delighted with his spirit and with his appearance, the Superintendent selected a field in British Columbia remote from civilization and calling for very considerable self-denial.

"But to my surprise, sir," said the Superintendent, relating the incident, "the very next morning I received a letter declining the appointment. I afterwards learned the cause. This sudden change of mind was due to his young lady and her family. For on hearing the news of the appointment, it appears that the mother burst into tears, the sister went into hysterics and the young lady herself lapsed into a succession of swoons from which nothing would recall her but a promise that her lover would abandon forever so desperate a venture as a British Columbia mission field. I was hardly surprised to learn," he added with evident relish, "that within a year that engagement was broken. And for his sake, sir, I was glad of it."

There were times when the Superintendent allowed his disappointment and desperation to extend the sickly hue of suspicion from the students to the college in which they were trained, and to the professors whose stamp they were supposed to bear.

"There is something sadly wrong," he writes, "about our young men and the mission field, and the same disease seems to trouble the American Church, as their reports disclose. People are praying for a revival of religion; the dry places of our Church, the places that need most to be revived, are the colleges, including the professors, for had the professors done their duty all the years of the past, the state of things we have would not exist. The Church has left the College to forage all over the Church for itself; the professors, consequently, wish as many of their own students as possible to be settled in Ontario and in good charges, so that the congregations of these men may help the College. There is, consequently, no effort made to keep the frontier before the students. Nor do professors go out to see the field for themselves; they stick about the towns or go to Britain, watering-places, etc., and the wants of the field are not known. The American Assembly is bringing this matter before the colleges, and, evidently, if their students shirk the work, the Assembly would like to know why. I wish to visit these colleges ere long and tell the students a few plain things."

And without a doubt this wish was gratified to his own relief and, let us hope, to the wholesome stirring of these same dry bones.

On another occasion, hearing that a college professor had been criticising a proposal to bring out men from Britain, he proceeded to deal with the situation in the following manner:

"I got him into the chair in a meeting in his own college last week, and gave him an exposition of the situation, and showed how absurd it would be for us to have work undone, asking British people to help us to do it, getting their financial help, and yet refusing their men, when our own refused to go even when subsidized by British funds. I told of my experience of writing to nearly thirty graduates last autumn, and of getting *one*—a solitary grad. to go. He had nothing to say, but affirmed that he was favourable to men going west. My reply was that his students did not heed his advice then, for since I was Superintendent we had got but an average of half a man a year."

The need of missionaries for Western supply at length passed beyond the bearing point, and compelled the serious attention of the whole Church. In 1891, the question of a Summer Session in Theology was revived. Overtures requesting the establishment of such a session were presented to the General Assembly from the Presbyteries of Toronto and of Brandon. These overtures were discussed with more than ordinary eloquence and energy, and were sent to a Committee representing almost all the great departments of the Church's work. The Committee laboured with the proposal for many hours and finally reported unfavourably to the proposed change. At this juncture a Western representative, Professor Bryce, backed up by Professor Scrimger of Montreal, submitted an amendment asking for the establishment of a Summer Session in Manitoba College. This was fiercely opposed, but at length it was given to another Western representative to suggest a solution that seemed to indicate the way of least resistance. On motion of the Rev. Hugh McKellar, the matter was remitted to the various Presbyteries for judgment. The following year forty-six Presbyteries reported, thirty-three favouring the establishment of a Summer Session and twenty-three expressing preference for Manitoba College. This report was again referred to a Committee, large and influential. Once more the Committee laboured with the question and referred the whole matter back to the Assembly. A motion to lay on the table was proposed and lost. Finally, on motion of Rev. D. M. Gordon, former minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, the Assembly agreed that a session in Theology should be held in the summer of 1893 in Manitoba College, which session was duly held, Principal Grant, Professors Maclaren, Scrimger and Thomson, and the Rev. Peter Wright of Portage la Prairie, assisting the staff of Manitoba College.

To the Assembly of 1893 the Superintendent was able to report that during the previous winter, in anticipation of the Summer Session, twenty-six Mission stations, with a constituency of over 1,200 Presbyterian families, had enjoyed Gospel ordinances and with an increased expenditure of only $1,400. The Summer Session was proved to be an unqualified success, and for nine years continued to give most valuable service to the Church, both west and east.

But in spite of the relief thus afforded, the phenomenal expansion of settlement consequent upon the growing volume of immigration into Western Canada, rendered the supply of mission fields increasingly difficult, until in 1900 the Superintendent in his report is forced to say somewhat bitterly :

"For a number of years past the supply of missionaries has been inadequate for winter service, and the work of the Church has accordingly suffered. Last winter, *seventeen* missions were without supply, and several more with only partial supply. This spring, after all the men available for Western work were selected, there were still fourteen vacancies. Subsequently, eight of those appointed declined to serve in the West, bringing the vacancies up to twenty-two. By getting men from Britain and the United States, by appointing graduates of the Bible Training School in Toronto, and through the efforts of a few gentlemen who have the interests of the West at heart, a number of these vacancies have been filled, but eleven missions at this moment stand vacant. This lack of supply has done great harm in the West already ; it has inflicted severe, irreparable losses on the Church in Northern Ontario, and should be remedied. The supply of men in the Church seems ample. The moment a prominent congregation in the West is vacant, letters pour in asking for a hearing—many of them from men who never had a charge. Were the General Assembly to require all graduates to labour a year in the mission field before settling, great relief would come to Home Mission work. And if, while engineering, law, and medical students are salted with heavy fees, the Church exacts no fees from the theological student, surely it is a small thing that they give one year's service to advance her work, especially when they are liberally remunerated. And if not, why should the students not pay for their own education?"

Eleven fields unmanned meant between thirty and forty preaching stations unsupplied, and this, to the Superintendent, seemed well-nigh intolerable. In that year overtures from the Presbytery of Algoma and the Synod of British Columbia, with a strong resolution from the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, were presented to the Assembly, asking, among other things, that the course in theology should be extended from three to four years, the last year to be spent in a mission field. The overture was, as usual, debated at great length, referred to a Committee, killed and decently buried beneath what proved to be a perfectly futile resolution, the truth being that the General Assembly knew full well that the democratic spirit in the Presbyterian Church now and then runs, to seed to the utter subversion of all discipline, and that in consequence it was impossible to enforce any such regulation as that desired by the overture.

XXVII

HANDLING HIS MEN

IT was hardly to be expected that the Superintendent could escape criticism of his method of handling his men. To him the work was ever first, before all else, and he, therefore, demanded and expected from his men loyalty, sincere and complete. And this, as a rule, he received. Occasionally, however, it was his misfortune to find among the ranks of his workers the lazy, the shiftless, the selfish, the unfaithful, and with these he was relentlessly severe. A minister repeats with great delight a story he once heard from the Superintendent:

"I remember him telling me of a student whose zeal was less than his indolence. He was in charge of a mission somewhere near Regina, and lived in rooms which were attached to the church. Dr. Robertson drove over one morning, knowing that he was due to preach in an outlying station ten miles away at eleven o'clock.

"'I knocked at the outer door at ten o'clock, sir, and when I got no answer I concluded that he had started on his journey. However, I opened the door and walked in. I went upstairs and rapped on the door of his bedroom. I heard a sleepy voice say, "Come in," and I opened the door and found him yet in bed. He preached that morning without his breakfast, sir.'"

A lazy minister or missionary, and he, alas, is not altogether a *rara avis*, drew his unmeasured contempt. Writing to a Western Convener, he thus discourses in regard to ministers of this class:

"I fear that the indifference you refer to in ministerial ranks is not confined to Kirkwall and Strabane; I meet it widely, and I am inclined to think it is doing more harm than the Higher Criticism. Men who work hard themselves are intolerant of idle and lazy ministers. Men appreciate an industrious, hard-working minister, and they despise the lazy slouch. But how are you to get such men retired? They will not resign, they cannot work, to beg they are ashamed."

In a British Columbia mining town in the Boundary Country, no end of trouble might have been saved had the missionary in charge been simply faithful to his duty. As it was, he shirked, to the permanent injury of the congregation and of the cause of religion in that town. The Superintendent visited the town a little later. The missionary then in charge tells the story:

"A year before, a young man had been in charge, and had been exceedingly popular. All agreed that if Blank had just said 'build a church,' the church would have been built with little trouble and no strife. Besides, the town was then in its most prosperous condition. That was the tide in the affairs that was missed. But Blank had not 'bothered.' Indeed, Dr. Robertson had heard that he had said he did not want to meddle with money matters. How the Doctor did hold this up to scorn! 'Didn't want to meddle with money matters! A very fine sort of gentleman, indeed! None of your coarse-grained, commercial sort. Didn't want to meddle! He was *too downright lazy.* That is what was the matter with him. Popular preacher! Liked afternoon teas, I suppose. Liked the ladies to tell him how well he had preached on Sunday. But to build a church! No, he was of too fine, ethereal material to meddle with such mundane matters. What did we pay him for anyway? What did we send him here for? To have a good time?

To be popular? That's not the kind of man we want in these mountains.' "

And, indeed, it added not a little to the Superintendent's burden that he had to assume the load too often that these men refused to bear. While he was full of encouragement for the "tenderfoot," he had little sympathy with a shirker, and exerted himself to develop in his men that indifference to discomfort, toil, and even danger, that was so conspicuous a characteristic of himself.

"Talking with a whining student one day," says one of his Conveners, "who was relating what he considered hardships in the way of uncomfortable beds in which there were crawling things, and irregular meals not always prepared in the most tasty form, the Superintendent began very sympathetically telling some of his own experiences. Sleeping one night in a dug-out, wrapped in his blanket on the clay floor which was several feet below the surface of the ground, he felt cold, clammy things on his neck and face. He would brush them off and turn over, and by the time he was getting off to sleep again there would be another visitation, and so he kept brushing them away the whole night.

"'And what were these things?' asked the wondering student.

"'Well, you see the floor was two feet below the ground, and there was an inclined approach cut out towards the door. The ground was worn away several inches lower than the door, and the lizards would fall over the edge of the cutting and crawl under the door, and during the night creep over the floor. And these lizards were enjoying a warm nest on my neck and face.'

"The poor student stood horrified. The Superintendent enthused for a few moments on lice and lizards and snakes, as though encounters therewith were as valuable as theology in a true missionary's education, and the complaining dude subsided. His hardships vanished into thin air. He was rebuked and shamed, but could not reply, and the conversation drifted to other themes."

Writing to one of his Western Conveners, he descants thus severely upon the lack of heroism in some of the students of this present age:

"This afternoon, without giving your name, I told the students that there was need of a Professor of Ethics in our Theological Colleges to teach men that when work was not done pay was not to be expected. I find that two or three men that shirked work and were not paid, have been poisoning the minds of men against the West. . . . In the ordinary student of to-day there is a good deal of poltroonery, and hence cold frightens him when any Northwest point is mentioned."

Greatly disturbed over the failure of men to keep appointments, he wrote to the Rev. C. W. Gordon, who was at that time assisting him in his work, one day as follows:

"Why would not A—— go to Melita? M—— would do good work there, but he seems to be afraid of getting too much work to do. His grandmother, mother, aunt, and the whole connection were particularly severe on men broad in their theology, or in search of an easy berth—it would be a pity if they have raised an over-fastidious man under their own roof. But try him."

The lash of sarcasm once fell sharp and keen upon a student whose intellectual indolence and a certain fatal facility of speech led him to suppose that no serious preparation was necessary for his sermons on the Lord's Day. It was after a meeting of a British Columbia Presbytery, and the Superintendent was chatting informally with a number of the men, that methods of preparing sermons came up for discussion. One said he carefully wrote his sermons and generally read them. This particular student was loud in his condemnation of this laborious method, stating that he never read his sermons. The Superintendent looked at him steadily and then blandly asked, "Mr. Blank, do you ever read anything?" The student lapsed into silence and the subject was speedily changed.

His demand for absolute devotion wrought in him a pity not unmingled with contempt for the man who was determined at all costs to enter upon the married state. With the Superintendent, even the sacred and inalienable right of a man to marry was held to be hardly a sufficient justification for his refusal to take a difficult field demanding the service of an unmarried man. With the Apostle Paul, he considered the present distress sufficiently severe to warrant a postponement of marriage.

"What is the meaning," he used to say, "of this unseemly haste on the part of our graduates to be married? One would think that they considered the ministry chiefly as a stepping-stone to matrimony. Can they not wait a year or two?"

A young minister who had rendered fine service in the mission field and was now the pastor of a settled congregation, tells the following story:

"When he had made several remarks which seemed to be designedly personal, I said:

"'Well, Doctor, it is not at all necessary for you to warn *me* against that mistake. I have no intention of entering the married state in the near future. In fact, I have no one in view, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether or not I shall ever marry.'

"Immediately on hearing this, the Doctor's look of abstraction vanished; he sat upright in his chair, stretched out his hand and said with great animation:

"'Give me your hand, my boy. You are just a man after my own heart.'"

This young minister has persisted with perhaps unnecessary fidelity in the path of celibacy.

The Superintendent could not bear with anything that savoured of indifference to the claims of honour on the part of his missionaries. With him, an appointment accepted carried with it an obligation which honour demanded should be fulfilled. Too often students, after accepting appointments, would calmly write announcing a change of intention, with never a consideration of the effect of such change upon the plans of the Superintendent or upon the interests of the field. Of course, this made confusion and carried disappointment to all concerned. In reference to a case of apparently aggravated selfishness, the Superintendent writes thus vigorously to one of his Conveners:

"I have read Mr. M——'s letter, and I think it could only have been written by a man half out of his head. If he is not satisfied, and will not be satisfied till he gets to the Coast, then he can go and stay there at his own expense. The Home Mission Fund is not in existence to gratify whims on the part of unreasonable men. The missions on the Coast are not such as he can supply, and we must be judges in such cases. He says he has claims. What are they? For that matter, no one has claims. He would not do at Denman, for he would have miles and miles to row, and sometimes in a rough sea. He would not do at Northfield, for he would have a drive of eighteen miles out to Englishman's River. At Cooke, we have Lloyd whose home is on the Coast, and his appointment saved us travelling expenses. Pender would give him constant rowing, and this he could not do. Mt. Lehman and Surrey require driving amidst roads almost impassable for four months. Mission is supplied by Thomson whose retention there saves travelling expenses. Mr. M—— was placed at Swift Current because trains passed there in the daytime. Were he at Gleichen, Sicamous, or Ashcroft, he would have night trains all the time. This was what he wanted to avoid. He wanted a mission where there was no driving—he could not stand the exposure. This we gave him.

"I write you in this way that you may know the situation. This man wants the moon, and will not be satisfied unless you give it to him. I do not think he will do in Banff. Copeland writes me he did not do well at Saskatoon, and that his money cannot be collected."

As the work grew, this breaking of faith on the part of missionaries began to embarrass so seriously, not only the Superintendent, but the Conveners in the various Presbyteries as well, that the matter became the subject of the following overture to the General Assembly by the Presbytery of Minnedosa, through the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories:

1. Whereas ministers and missionaries have made application to the Home Mission Committee for work, received regular appointments to fields within the bounds of Minnedosa Presbytery, and have accepted the same and have in several instances failed to fill the appointments;

2. Whereas such failures have embarrassed the Executive of the Presbytery and created friction between said Executive and the field to which they have been appointed;

3. Whereas the work of the Church in important fields has been seriously retarded and the cause of Christ injured by such failures, and

4. Whereas such disappointments tend to weaken the faith of our people in the general integrity of our ministers and missionaries, and the vexed delays in supply which inevitably follow, together with the consequent suspense and uncertainty of future supply, rapidly des-

troys the confidence of our people in the system of supply, and is leading to unrest and dissatisfaction with the general polity of our Church ;

Therefore, the Presbytery of Minnedosa humbly overtureth, etc.

The overture was transmitted to the General Assembly *simpliciter* and by the General Assembly was referred to the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, and there disappeared from view. It is an index of the difficulty of administration often experienced by the Superintendent, that the Synod refused to express approval of the overture, but transmitted it to the Assembly *simpliciter*.

Occasionally the Presbytery of Winnipeg, as the gateway Presbytery and the Presbytery most easily convened, would be asked to ordain a man *en route* to a Western field. Sometimes the Presbytery, for one reason and another, demurred. After one such refusal the Superintendent writes to a Western Presbytery as follows :

"The Presbytery of Winnipeg is too large—its men are—for so small a matter as the ordination of a minister. An elephant has a trunk to pick up small things ; the metropolitan Presbytery was made without a trunk. Ordain S—— yourselves. It is well that efficiency does not depend on ordination."

But he never sulked, nor cherished any feeling of bitterness. The work was too great to permit of anything paltry in spirit or in policy. Nor was he ever known to cherish any feeling of bitterness even against a student, no matter how grievously he had disappointed him. He was ever ready to give a man his second chance. This spirit is shown in a marked degree in a case which caused very considerable trouble at the time. A student employed in the Presbytery of Calgary, left his field without leave from his Convener, and was, in consequence, refused his Presbyterial certificate to college.

The young man betook himself to an American college, and, returning the year following, applied to the Assembly to have his year allowed. The Assembly granted his request, and the young man was joyfully proceeding on his way. But his Convener was a man not to be trifled with, and he promptly entered a *caveat*. The young man's course was blocked, and so continued until, upon recommendation of his Presbytery, the *caveat* was withdrawn. The Superintendent writes as follows to his Convener about the matter :

"Enclosed please find the extract minute of the Presbytery bearing on the Blank case. It was sent me by him, with the simple request that I give my approval. The Clerk wrote me saying he thought Blank had been sufficiently punished, and that if you and I saw fit to release him it would be well. The correspondence with the Presbytery I have not seen, but judge in part what it was by this resolution. Nor am I sure it was quite straightforward. I fear Mr. Blank suffers from 'lubricity of memory' occasionally. However, this may be a lesson to him for a long time, and it may be better to err on the side of mercy than to hold the balance rigidly for justice. However, write me and let me know your mind. I told Blank I was sending the extract to you and that I would write results later."

A second letter closes the incident :

"Yours of 14th January was duly received here to-day, and, as you know, I entirely agree with your 'sizing up' of Mr. Blank. Taking a conjunct view of the whole, however, it is as well perhaps to err on the side of mercy. I am more and more impressed, however, with the laxness of some of our young men, and such conduct, if persevered in, will do much harm. Many of them need a course in Ethics rather than in Theology."

The financial arrangement under which missionaries were employed, was often the cause of misunderstanding and heartburning. It was as follows: Upon recommendation of the Presbytery's Convener, or of the Superintendent of Missions, the financial ability of the field was estimated at so much per week, the balance required to bring up the amount to full salary was guaranteed by the Assembly's Home Mission Committee. It was part of the duty of the missionary in charge to see that the field implemented its part of the bargain, and, indeed, that it did its full share in the support of ordinances.

Not infrequently men were found who cherished grievances against the Superintendent, the Convener, and, indeed, the whole Western work, because of the failure on the part of fields to pay the full amount pledged. In many cases these men were discovered to be those who had failed, through ignorance or carelessness or incapacity, to attend with proper diligence to the financial side of their work, and hence left their fields with their salaries in arrears. These excited in no slight degree the wrath of the Superintendent. Upon this subject the following extract from a letter gives us his mind:

"Complaints as to treatment are so common that one scarcely knows what to say; and they are more common in other Churches, and rest on a better foundation than in ours. We had a meeting here with the students last week, when grievances were ventilated, and the matter of deficits and arrears discussed. I frankly told the men that there was another side, and gave instance after instance where men complained where there was no room, because presents made to students amounted to more than the deficit. Frequently men do not discharge their whole duty and people refuse to pay, of which instances were given; men are not acceptable, have not the conditions of acceptable service in them, and such men are apt to have arrears. If in every case these are to be paid, then we must cease to employ them. Here one man has arrears every half year, and yet has a grant of five dollars a week; another follows him and has no arrears, and yet has no grant at all, does not ask any. Should the Home Mission Committee pay a grant of five dollars arrears and all? I doubt it."

The meeting referred to was held in Manitoba College and was the climactic result of accumulated grievances on the score of arrears. A member of the Home Mission Committee who was present at that indignation meeting, thus describes it:

"The room was filled with men hot and apparently thirsting for vengeance. A sympathetic professor occupied the chair. It looked like a bad half hour for the Superintendent. The sympathetic professor stated the reasons for calling the meeting—a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the methods of administration of Home Mission work. Many students had suffered financially, some so seriously as to be prevented from continuing their college course. There was a strong feeling that something ought to be done. The Superintendent was listening eagerly.

"'That's right,' he said shortly, when the professor had finished. 'Now let us hear the facts.'

"The facts were slow in coming. At length up rose a student, modest, with the reputation as a hard worker. Hesitatingly he stated his case. His field had been unable to pay the amount estimated, and he was the sufferer to the extent of $60. He would not have spoken, but from a sense of duty. He sat down amid enthusiastic applause. Encouraged by the applause, student number two rose and, touching somewhat lightly upon his own case, launched forth a statement of grievances in general, going somewhat fully into both ancient and recent history. Another followed and then another, telling with variations the same story.

"The case looked black for the administration, and now came the defence. All waited for the long-looked-for opportunity to 'heckle' the Superintendent. But the opportunity did not come that afternoon, nor ever, for in not more than half a dozen sentences the Superintendent had them on the defensive by enunciating two principles. First, it was the duty of the missionary to keep his Convener informed of the financial condition of his field, so that any discrepancy might be promptly attended to. Secondly, the supreme end of the Church in conducting Home Mission work was not the furnishing of students with the means of completing their college course. That part was purely incidental. Then he proceeded to elaborate and illustrate his first principle. There were cases of real hardship; for instance, student number one. In his field frost had cut down the crop, there was no money, consequently, the field was unable to pay its share. The student was too modest to complain, though he should have reported. 'But we all know Mr. Blank. He should have made a claim for special consideration; such a claim would have been met.' (Cheers.) And every such claim would be met when properly presented. (More cheers.) But there were other students. And for half an hour he held up to the admiring and delighted gaze of at least a part of his audience, a series of pictures of men who had left their fields with salaries in arrears. One with luxurious habits had bought freely grapes, cigars, etc., but could not pay his board bill. Another was too spiritually minded to organize a Board of Management, much less suggest a subscription list. A third was of so studious a turn of mind that he more frequently wore out the seat of his trousers than the soles of his boots. A fourth exhausted his energies in attending young ladies to picnics, Sunday-school and other. (Great applause.) A fifth disgusted his congregation with slovenly sermons, consequently they 'would not pay for slop.' A sixth came away with a large present in his pocket, leaving the Home Mission Committee to pay arrears. A seventh—and so the list went on, gleaming with humour, irony, and now and then with flashing indignation.

"By this time every student was apparently happy, those with real grievances satisfied that their claims would be adjusted, the others unwilling to classify themselves in that terrible list of incompetents. But the real defence of the administration came in the elaboration of the second principle, and here the Superintendent turned himself loose on the theme that lay so near to his heart—the necessity, the opportunity for Home Mission work. Statistics in regard to country and Church, stories of missionary heroism were poured forth with marvellous richness of colouring and detail.

"The close was a word of warm commendation of the missionaries before him who had toiled and suffered in the work, till they were listening with shining eyes and, I have no doubt, each with a lump in his throat. Then they gathered round him, each eager to get that quick, warm, downward grip of the Superintendent's hand. And that was the end of that indignation meeting."

But where he could not meet his missionaries face to face, and where financial grievances were complicated with questions of rights of Presbytery and of Presbyters, the trouble assumed serious proportions. This was the case with the Calgary Presbytery. The fields in this Presbytery consisted chiefly of vast reaches of sparsely-settled ranching country, of long drawn strips of railway lines, and of a few sordid and drink-sodden mining camps. The work was depressing and difficult, the financial returns from mission fields always precarious and often meagre. The Home Mission grants, therefore, were always large, and these the Committee sought steadily to reduce. Under the inspiration of a visit from the Convener or Superintendent, the fields would promise liberal support, but from any one of a variety of causes, the failure of crop or of cattle market, the shifting of population, the inadaptability of the missionary, these promises often failed of fulfillment. Whatever the cause, all faults were laid at the Superintendent's door. He was the scapegoat for all offenders.

An appeal for relief from grievances was addressed to the Assembly's Home Mission Committee by the Presbytery, to deal with which the Home Mission Committee appointed a special Committee, with Rev. Dr. Laing as Convener. The finding of the Committee is embodied in the report, of which the following is an extract, transmitted by Dr. Laing to the Rev. J. C. Herdman, Clerk of the Presbytery and prince of Home Mission Conveners:

"It is evident that in past years many things happened which imposed inconvenience and even hardships on missionaries. As, however, not a few of these unhappy occurrences have as far as possible been rectified, and the parties more immediately interested seem to be willing to let the past rest, while more particularly under the new arrangement for conducting the Synod's business, every effort will be made to prevent the recurrence of such things, the General Assembly's Committee does not deem it necessary to make further reference to the alleged grievances.

"As to the remedies suggested by the Presbytery, the Committee carefully considered these with the following result:

"1. They cannot approve of the suggestion that the whole salary of missionaries shall be guaranteed by the Assembly's Committee.

"2. They think that any reduction in grants should be and naturally will be known to the Presbytery, and that the missionary should be informed of the change; also, that some time should elapse between resolving on the change and giving effect to it.

"3. That no allowance can be made for Sabbaths during which a minister is absent from his field except in cases of sickness or inability to fulfill appointments.

"4. That not only should Presbyteries have a voice in estimating the amounts required from mission fields and congregations, and in the appointments made to them, but that the responsibility in these matters lies *primarily* and chiefly on Presbyteries.

"5. It was resolved to refer to a small sub-committee to prepare a plan for meeting travelling expenses from the Eastern Provinces to Winnipeg; and for expenses from Winnipeg *to* the particular field of labour, for which expenses alone the Assembly's Committee shall be responsible.

"6. Also it was resolved, with the view of preventing misunderstandings, to issue to every missionary appointed by the Assembly's Committee a commission, stating in detail all the particulars connected with the appointment, and showing clearly what each missionary may expect, without reference to the terms of the appointment of any other."

Reading between the lines, it is not hard to see that the causes of trouble lay in the system rather than in the administration. In reference to this, which was at the time to the Superintendent a very painful episode, and all the more because of his high regard for some of those actively engaged in pushing this appeal, notably the Rev. Angus Robertson, than whom the Superintendent had no more loyal friend in after-years, the judgment of the Rev. J. C. Herdman will be illuminating:

"The Presbytery of Calgary was formed in July, 1887. When we met and began to get under way for work, we found ourselves almost at a standstill caused by the unpleasant fact that so many of the missionaries of the Presbytery (good men they were, too) had grievances, real *and* alleged, which Dr. Robertson was supposed to be, or was counted to be, responsible for. Actually then, the first year of our life as a Presbytery had to go to getting together a string of difficulties and disabilities and setting them at length before the Assembly's Home Mission Committee. I was clerk of Presbytery at the time. I remember that many 'grievances' disappeared at the telling, but yet a number remained and had to be taken up seriously. The final answer to all the counts is given in Dr. Laing's communication. One or two individual cases of hardship were dealt with, in a reassuring way, outside this communication. On the whole, though the grievance list began somewhat pointedly in the use of the Superintendent's name, the progress of negotiations showed increasingly that whatever grievances had existed were grievances against the conditions, and to a certain extent against the system of work, nowise against the man who was in the first instance held responsible. Of the missionaries then, in this Presbytery, who were most insistent and vehement in their denunciations, one soon after became the most devoted friend and admirer of the Superintendent, and the other greatly modified the aspersions in which he had at first abounded."

It is pleasant to think that, for the last decade of his life, the voice of criticism was never heard from those who wrought under him or in coöperation with him in the Western field. Mistakes might be made, and as the burdens of the ever-growing work accumulated upon his shoulders mistakes were made, but by that time men had learned to know and appreciate the single-hearted devotion and the sheer greatness of the man who was paying out his life to his cause.

XXVIII

CARING FOR HIS MEN

IF the Superintendent worked his men hard and made large demands upon their self-denial and their loyalty, he gave them in return all he had of that priceless gift of sympathy expressed not only in words, but in deeds as well. Many a man in financial straits applied to the Superintendent for *advice*, and not only did he receive advice, but also that financial aid he was too sore at heart or too proud to ask. None knew better than the Superintendent the severity of the trial imposed upon the missionary, and more upon the missionary's wife, by poverty. And none was quicker in sympathy and readier to help with a loan, to tide over a period of embarrassment. And it is only just to say that where there was an honest attempt at repayment, the Superintendent was never known to humiliate his debtor by pressing for payment. But where there was neither attempt to meet the debt nor any sense of obligation apparent, as was too frequently the case, the Superintendent's sense of honour was offended and his righteous wrath would burn. He considered it an injury to the honour of the Church that a missionary should be careless of his financial obligations. In this regard he writes to a Western Convener as follows:

"Mr. Blank wrote me about the balance in your hands coming to me. He seems to be in straits, so I allow you to remit him the amount, but when the twenty-five per cent. is sent you from the Committee, I want you to retain that for me. It is to me clear that unless Blank finances differently and better, he is soon to get hopelessly involved, and in such a case his connection with us cannot continue. Please govern yourself accordingly."

Apparently Mr. Blank, however, was able to work upon the sympathies of the Superintendent, for a little later he writes to the same Convener in this way:

"I was sorry to learn of Mr. Blank's difficulties, but have no idea that his past will in any way be a lesson to him. Those who know him and his family should never have advocated his ordination. When once ordained, he seems to have thought that he was to get a certain salary, and up to and beyond this figure he pitched the scale of his living, and when the part of the salary promised by the people was not paid, he fell into arrears. There is no use trying to keep him up at the present rate. My idea was to get half of mine now and half next spring, but this now seems impracticable. I must, however, have part now, for I have obligations to meet, and must leave it with you to do your best in the circumstances. He begged me not to ask anything at present, but I could not afford this, as at least a dozen men are in my debt and all are asking favours. I question, in the light of my experience, whether in every case it would not be better to let every man manage his own finances and learn from the outset how to square his outlay with his income. Do not let any of them get you involved. Keep your hands off other people's paper, if you would escape being scorched."

A very wise advice, indeed, but one exceedingly difficult to follow, especially by a man occupying a high position in the Church. We are glad to learn from the following letter that Mr. Blank made an attempt to meet his obligations:

"Yours enclosing check for fifty-eight dollars in part payment of loan to Blank. I am willing to wait till spring for balance, but see he does not wheedle you out of it—I could not trust myself when he begins to tell his story—as I cannot afford to lose this money. I am sorry for him, but yet his foolish ways are at the bottom of the whole trouble."

And these "foolish ways" are responsible, not only for much misery to those immediately concerned, but to all who seek in any way to assist them. Yet it is because of these "foolish ways" of foolish men that wiser men must bear their burdens. But whether the Superintendent chose the wisest plan is open to question. Perhaps he did, for though his method might be judged by many to be wholly unbusinesslike and his benevolence to be wholly misplaced, it may be that in the long run his folly proved the highest wisdom. There is evidence still in existence that by reason of these advances the Superintendent was financially the poorer by many thousands of dollars. But it is safe to say that he had compensations which could not be estimated in the money market.

Before the Assembly's Home Mission Committee the Superintendent invariably stood forth as the champion of the West and of the Western missionary. Not unfrequently strict justice and sound business principle were upon the side of the Committee who were acting as trustees for Church funds. The Superintendent's appeal in such cases was based upon the quality of mercy and that wider justice in which the element of humanity and the claims of a common brotherhood have large place.

The late Superintendent of Missions for North Ontario, the Rev. A. Findlay, whose wide experience in matters of this kind lends weight to his words, gives an instance in the following letter :

"How long ago I cannot say, nor who the man was, but I remember the incident very distinctly. It appeared that the Superintendent had sent a man to some new point, counting on certain returns from the field, but had been disappointed. There was due the missionary somewhere in the neighbourhood of $200, for which the Doctor asked a special grant of the above sum. It was discussed by the Committee at length. A vote was taken on the motion 'that inasmuch as he had not consulted the Committee in the matter, it be not granted.' I can see the Doctor yet, his tall figure towering over the head of the Convener as he explained the circumstances to the brethren. When the decision was announced, he resumed his seat with the remark :

"'That is an honest debt. I promised him that he should get it, and he shall. I will pay it out of my own pocket.'

"Later a motion to reconsider was carried, and the amount passed."

This failure to consult the Committee was a sore point with the brethren, and the cause of many a severe criticism of their Superintendent, but all to no purpose. He was far from headquarters, the necessity for prompt action was imperative, hence the Superintendent acted and explained afterwards to the Committee, to their amusement or to their fury. Finally they surrendered. The Superintendent could not be "regulated."

There were two passions at work in his heart, the passion of sympathy—and a passion it was—for the hard-worked and poverty-stricken missionary, and the passion to guard his own honour and that of his Church. He was ever ready to show his personal interest in the work of his missionaries, and his delight in its progress by a contribution to that work. To a hard-working missionary in Manitoba, famous as a builder of churches, he writes as follows :

"Please find enclosed check for fifty dollars, being twenty-five dollars contribution towards the Building

Fund of the church at Arden, and twenty-five dollars of an advance on salary. I wish very much I could have made your Building Fund a larger contribution, but I have more claims than usual this year.

"Wishing you every success in your work, and expressing my high appreciation of the spirit shown by you and work done as a contribution to the Church."

A missionary striving to give "visibility" to the cause in a British Columbia town, thus writes:

"I sent him an account of the progress we were making towards building the church at Cascade. We had subscriptions for twenty dollars, ten dollars, and so on down. Shortly afterwards I received a letter from him expressing his great pleasure in hearing of the work at Cascade, and adding, 'Put my name down on your twenty dollar list.' I told him when I saw him later, that it was with no thought of his contributing that I had sent him the account.

"'I know it. I know it,' he answered. 'But it does me good to encourage the people and the missionary, and it will do the people good to find that there are others beside themselves interested in their welfare.'"

Upon another occasion he wrote a missionary who had passed through an unhappy squabble with a sister denomination in the matter of a union church, in which squabble the Presbyterians had come off, as was usually the case, second-best, as follows:

"But are his people willing to carry out Mr. H——'s dishonourable policy in the matter of services? The building was said to be a union building, and all were to share alike in it till they got places of worship of their own. Will he not concede something on that score? Were I in your place, however, I would arrange to put up a shell of a church, the people giving as much as possible, and the Church and Manse Board loaning you say $500. Why, with that and what your people could do, should you not be able to erect a building without plaster and without seats, but suitable for service? For such a building I would try to send you fifty dollars myself. I shall try to visit you in September, but go on now if you can. I shall write the Board to help you."

But far more than any financial help could be to his men, was the sympathetic understanding of all their trials and their needs. His visit to a missionary always brought inspiration and fresh courage.

On one occasion it was the writer's great privilege to accompany the Superintendent on a missionary tour throughout Alberta and British Columbia. The visit to Lethbridge, Alberta, then in charge of the Rev. Charles McKillop, a man whose heroic service and whose personal worth will ever be remembered with pride and affection by those who knew him, was thus recorded at the time:

"Between two and three in the morning we were making our way to the manse, piloted by the minister, I ready to drop at every step, but the chief apparently good for an all-night walk. We spent next forenoon in the study, talking about Lethbridge, its prospects, its depressions; the church, its standing financially and spiritually; the country about, the morals of the community, temperance, Sabbath observance, the Mormon settlement not far away, the state of the work there, etc. At first I thought we were only having a friendly chat, but I soon perceived that the Superintendent was doing his work, and before the chat was over he had got full knowledge of the congregation and its work, its strength and its weakness, its successes and its failures; he had got the minister's judgment upon the prospects of the country, with the facts upon which the judgment was based; in short, he had mastered the subject of Lethbridge. During this conversation he had been giving his opinion, too, on many points, suggesting methods of work, pointing out defects, emphasizing the extreme importance of maintaining a high standard in our Western Church, and all in such a way that the minister, instead of feeling as if he were being catechized, felt that he was having a fine time, as, indeed, he was, and that Dr. Robertson could spin a first-class yarn, which also was perfectly true. Next morning, however, when we bade farewell to Lethbridge, he left the minister and the minister's wife in braver heart for their work, and that is much."

It was a continual source of wonder to his co-labourers in the work how, by the touch of his personality, he could lift a man out of discouragement and defeat into hope and determination to win at all costs.

"I shall never forget," writes one of his fellow-labourers, "the new view I had of our Superintendent one night as he sat in a dreary little room of a Western hotel, trying to brace up a young missionary on his first visit to the wild West. It was immediately after the meeting of the Synod of Regina. The young man had sat through the Synod, more and more impressed every hour with the snap and swing of its procedure. The wide outlook, the far-reaching plans, the calm courage with which these men of the West assumed their responsibilities, the absence of pettiness and especially of personal considerations, had stirred the young man's blood. He was ready for anything heroic. But he had been billed for Nelson, British Columbia, and was *en route* to his field. On the way up, a British Columbia man had been filling him up with ghastly stories about Nelson's wickedness and Nelson's depravity, and had ended up his tale by assuring the prospective missionary that the town was dead, too dead to be buried. The missionary was hesitating and unwilling to go forward; not because of the difficulties and terrors of the town, but because it was dead. He had only one life and he was unwilling to waste it in a funeral service. He had in his hand a call from a Western American town of 1,200 people, with no church and no Christian service, offering him a fine opportunity and, incidentally, although this did not weigh much, a big salary. The Superintendent took him in hand like a father. He had had a fatiguing day at Synod, but there was no sign of weariness in the way he went at that young man. Patiently, kindly, earnestly, he dealt with him, showing the desperate need and the splendid opportunity in Nelson.

" 'Go and see,' he said finally. 'Remember you have a great Church behind you, and if in six months you think you are wasting your time, we will take you out.' "

The young man went, and the story of the work done in Nelson by Thomas H. Rogers, the first missionary to that mining town, lives still with the old-timers and with all his co-presbyters. In six months he came to his Presbytery red hot. Abandon Nelson? Never! The very least that would satisfy him was two additional workers. He had demanded three. Ten years afterwards this missionary, looking back through a mist, not of years only, but of tears as well, for his chief was dead, speaks in this way:

"Ten years vanished like a morning mist, and I was standing again on the wharf at Robson, B. C., awaiting the arrival of the big stern-wheeler from Revelstoke with Dr. Robertson on board. I had come over from the Kootenay Valley to the Columbia to meet him. How it all comes back again! I can even hear the raucous cry of the raven from the spruce and cottonwoods across the Columbia hurrying its water past the sloping dock, and a French Canadian telling somebody to *ennui* that what this country needs is development, with a strong accent on the first syllable.

"All at once the chiming steamboat whistle sounds and the Columbia around the bend is heading straight for the dock as if she would like to devour it. She is twice her usual size, but that is because Dr. Robertson is on board. There he stands, a striking figure in any company, tall, commanding, the only form I saw on that deck. Who will ever forget the huge black planter hat he wore? There is a smile and two or three satisfied nods as he recognizes me standing on a stanchion, thrilled to the marrow of my bones. I was over the rail with my arm around him in short order.

"'So you came thirty miles out to meet me,' he soon got time to say.

"'If you knew what your visit down here means to us, you would not be surprised at that,' I answered.

"'How is Martin?' he asked.

"'He is well and on the crest of the boom as usual,' I was glad to reply.

"Rev. D. M. Martin, now of Cannington, and I were the only Presbyterian missionaries south of the main line at that time between the Okanagan Valley and Lethbridge. Now there is a Presbytery.

"On that visit the Superintendent mastered every detail of the Kootenay work, and was able to direct its development from his headquarters in closer touch with his base of supplies.

"In Nelson it soon became known that a great man had come, and a crowded church faced him on his return from the north end of the field. He spoke to the people of the country and the country's God. He gave facts and figures relating to the wealth of the country, which I have never heard gainsaid, and which astounded his hearers there. And he spoke of the shame of sin and disloyalty to our nation's God, asking significantly if they were not ashamed of the huge heaps of empty bottles which, after the reduction of freight rates, were shipped out by the car-load. Further, he praised the missionary to the people before his very face.

"'It's worth while to hear a man like that talk; he knows something,' was the comment of a shrewd lawyer on the sermon.

"It is a fact that he declined the pleasure of a half-day's fishing, the very best in America, for the sake of the work. This means much to any man who knows how to coil a fifty-foot line.

"This is given as a mere sample of a visit from Dr. Robertson, and I feel assured that from that date the importance of the Presbyterian Church bulked larger than ever before in Nelson, as, in fact, it must wherever he went."

The Superintendent had a quick eye for the man who was down, but still striving to do his best. To his fellow missionaries he might appear a failure, to himself he certainly did, but to his Superintendent the heroism of his losing campaign strongly appealed. The following incident is told by a co-Presbyter of a discouraged man:

"I remember one case of a missionary who had not been well and who had suffered from a sort of chronic disability that at times completely prostrated him. At a meeting of Presbytery he was overcome going to the church, and fainted on the street. We were all very sorry, of course, but did not show the practical sympathy that the Doctor did. After the Presbytery meeting we were all going home, the Doctor and I to Vancouver. This minister was on the train, and was to get off at a station reached about three o'clock in the morning. This was after the Doctor had been so ill that it was feared he would not recover. We were all anxious to spare him as much as possible, and it seemed necessary to take him in hand at times and peremptorily order him to desist from working, so that he could take needed rest. It was not customary for him to take a sleeping-car, so this night, fearing that he would not, I exacted a promise from him before I retired, to do so when he finished his conversation. Next morning when I met the Doctor, I knew he had not been in bed. I at once reminded him of his promise, for I felt guilty in having left him the night before. He said:

"'You know how discouraged Mr. H—— was, so I waited up to chat with him until he left the train, thinking I could give him some encouragement, and after that it was not worth while to go to bed, for the train was late, and it was nearly morning when he left me.'

"And so he had gone without a night's rest for the one purpose of giving cheer to a missionary who was discouraged. And as a matter of fact, that man, who had failed before in his field, now succeeded most wonderfully."

A man saved from defeat in the presence of his enemies is a man endowed with victory. And no finer bit of work did the Superintendent do for his Church in many a year, than he did that night.

To see him transacting business, to note his shrewd common sense, his demand for accuracy in detail, one would think that he was lacking in those heart qualities that are necessary to real greatness. But whoever read him so, read him superficially. There is one missionary in the West to-day who can scarcely speak of the Superintendent without tears, for there comes with his name the memory of how, in the hour of his shame, the Superintendent came to him, lifted him, stood beside him, and stood for him till he was fully restored to his place. He is now an honoured minister in a Western Church, and rendering good service. And this is how he writes:

"He never forsook me. When friends became cold and many former acquaintances refused to recognize and speak to me, he stood by me. When, after almost total starvation having faced me and mine, I got a situation, he seemed to be overjoyed. He took up my case, and by his effort on my behalf I was restored to the ministry. No sooner was this done than he wrote me to prepare to come west and take up the work.

"In the winter of '99 he spent two days with us. We were proud to have him under our roof. He went away and I never saw him again, but his influence on my life will never leave me."

There is no more difficult or painful duty that falls to a superior officer, than to tell a subordinate that he is unfit and has failed. And it is only the truest sense of loyalty to the trust imposed in him by his Church that forced the Superintendent now and then to tell a missionary the painful truth about himself. To the Convener of a missionary of this kind he writes as follows:

"You will see Mr. Blank's people and confer with them shortly, but neither he nor they need expect any increase in grant; rather they must be prepared for a reduction. The Church has dealt generously with him and them; he has done more to make himself and family comfortable since he joined us than in all his life before, apparently. His present home, with its comforts, has come to him through his stay with us. And that he is able to keep his children in town is the best proof that he is fairly well-cared-for. Large grants to stations may be made at the start, but they should not be expected to continue, the extension of work forbids it. . . . Keep your eye on this. It is not easy to move a man with such a large family, but the Home Mission Fund cannot be relied upon to perpetuate a state of things that in the last analysis is not equitable."

To the missionary himself he writes in this way:

"Your letter was sad reading, but what do you propose to do? It would seem that there are no openings for you in your own Presbytery, nor yet in the Presbytery adjoining. You would not find it congenial work in the mining district, nor could you easily get about. To come further east would be to remove far from your family; nor are the conditions any better than where you are. I would scarcely advise you to try the probationer's rôle, but if you can save little money as a missionary, you could save less as a probationer.

"Your statement of expenses for eighteen months is scarcely fair, is it? You do not need a new buggy every eighteen months, nor a new cutter, nor a new team, nor a new set of harness? Would these not serve two eighteen months? If not, the tear and wear must be unusually heavy. And yet you charge them all to the eighteen months.

"Have you carefully inquired as to the causes of your non-success, and have you tried to remedy them? . . . When I mentioned your name in connection with a number of fields, they all said no. And yet they all acknowledged that you were a good preacher. I shall think the matter over, and if I can suggest any remedy I shall write you."

That was a difficult letter to write. It required courage of the highest quality, simply because his heart was overflowing at the time with sympathy for the man and his family. It was a great relief to the Superintendent to be able to find another sphere of work for this particular missionary, and to discover that his faithfulness in dealing with him was not lost, for in his new field he is meeting with great success.

Resolute as the Superintendent was that the work should not be sacrificed to the missionary, he was the last man on the Committee to give a man up, and in the Western Synodical Committee, the whole question of supply would often be reopened in the hope of finding a field for a weak brother, whom no Presbytery had been anxious to employ. He would indignantly resent anything like unfair treatment of a missionary on the part of any congregation. The following letter sets his attitude before us in clear light:

"Mr. F—— has written me twice about Mr. M——, and I do not know what these people mean. Surely they do not want us to dismiss Mr. M—— in the middle of the six months. I wrote Mr. F—— that there was a certain orderly way of doing business and that that would be followed. Mr. M——'s reputation is part of his capital, and we do not intend to destroy that to please a few fussy people. They know the Presbytery meets on the 11th, that the half year does not end for a month yet, and I cannot understand why they should become hysterical in this way. He tells me that unless assured of Mr. M——'s removal, they will not go on to build the church. To yield to such a threat as that would be poltroonery. If they will not build without blasting Mr. M——'s reputation, let the church go unbuilt till they come to a better frame of mind. If no higher motive actuated, it does not pay to do wrong. The course pursued is calculated to arouse Mr. M——'s friends to oppose any settlement and so divide a congregation now too weak. Counsel these people to act in a sane and seemly way and not lose their heads. It seems to be nothing to some of them that Mr. M—— might be handicapped in getting another place. Ministerial reputation is too delicate for such rough handling. But I shall see you at Presbytery."

His determination to defend the honour of his Church was illustrated in another manner. Visiting a mission field on one occasion, he fell in with a man who had a grievance against the Presbyterian missionary, and on being asked the reason, declared that he had been cheated, that the missionary had refused to pay a bill.

"Bring me the bill," said the Doctor, "and I will pay it. The Presbyterian Church shall not lie under any such charge."

The bill could not be produced and the accuser was convicted of fraud.

Men who have not had the privilege of working side by side with the Superintendent, of sharing his trials and his hardships, have found it impossible to understand that marvellous power he had of binding men's hearts to himself. The strongest and most enduring strands in that bond were their sharing in a common devotion to a great cause, and their undying admiration for his zeal that never tired, his enthusiasm that never waned, his courage that never faltered. But, more than all, he gripped them with the deep love of a great heart. Writing to one of his Western missionaries, he uses these touching words:

"I highly appreciate the service that you are rendering, and especially the quiet plodding way in which, without pause and without complaint men, like yourself carry on your work. May God sustain you and may your heart be cheered by seeing many brought from darkness to light and from the service of sin to the service of the living and true God!

"There is scarcely a night after I retire to rest that I do not begin at Lake Superior and pay you all a visit before sleep benumbs the brain."

And brain and body and heart were weary enough to need every precious hour of the few left him for sleep.

XXIX

THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE PEOPLE

THE Superintendent possessed in an extraordinary degree that quality so essential to the public speaker, a sensitiveness to the temper and feeling of his audience. He was quick to read faces, and quick to detect and analyze the play of emotion.

Early in his career as Superintendent, he visited a newly-settled district on the North Saskatchewan, a district which he discovered to be settled largely by people of Scottish extraction. On the Sabbath morning they gathered for a service on the leeside of a little poplar "bluff." It was their first service in that lonely new land. Most of them had come for many miles by waggon, by ox-cart, on horseback, and on foot. The Superintendent, standing upon an upturned waggon box, announced that Psalm so heart-penetrating for homesick folk:

> Lord, Thee my God, I'll early seek;
>   My soul doth thirst for Thee;
> My flesh longs in a dry parched land,
>   Wherein no waters be.

Through the first verse they bravely sang, but not without some quavering. The second verse they found more difficult.

> That I Thy power may behold,
>   And brightness of Thy face,
> As I have seen Thee heretofore
>   Within Thy holy place.

The voices faltered and many broke into sobbing.. At the third verse none could sing. Then the Superintendent preached to them of home and God and their duty to the new country. The folk of that community would be unwilling to let the story of that service die out of their traditions.

The Superintendent was never more at home than when addressing a crowd of rough men, whether miners, railroad men, or lumbermen. On one occasion he was visiting Rossland, a British Columbia mining town then at the height of its boom. Mr. H. J. Robertson was the missionary in charge, and by sheer grit and energy, and by unfailing tact, he had got the first church built in that part of the mountains, and this was the night of its opening. One who was present thus describes the meeting :

"The Superintendent stood up before that mining crowd and began to address them upon what would seem to many a strange theme, Home Missions. But in his magic hand the subject became at once arresting. The men listened with open eyes and ears to that thrilling series of statistics, incidents, and appeals. After all was over one of them said to me in a grave, subdued excitement :

"'Say, ain't he a corker?' and then solemnly, after due thought, 'He's a Jim Dandy corker!'

"Most of them were lads from Eastern Canada or from the Old Land across the sea, and the burr in the Doctor's voice, the genuine human warmth and the manly straightforwardness of his address, went straight to their hearts. As he closed with an appeal for a pure and manly Christian life, in the name of all that was best and noblest in their past, picturing for them their homes, and reminding them of the dear ones there, many a poor fellow found it necessary to surreptitiously wipe away the tears that gathered, lest they should fall and shame him.

"After the meeting the fellows gather round him, some to claim personal acquaintance, for the Doctor has travelled far, others to make inquiry in regard to their 'people.' And then many a chap goes to his shack and writes to his mother that night."

His perfect courtesy made it easy for the Superintendent to adapt himself to any circumstances. A service having been arranged in a lumber camp about twelve miles away from a British Columbia village, in company with a lady who was interested in the work and who was to assist in the singing, the Superintendent drove out to the camp, the missionary following on a broncho. The party arrived, by appointment, in time for supper. The ordinary lumbermen's supper of pork and beans, and fried potatoes, and pies and cakes, was on this occasion supplemented, in honour of the Superintendent's visit, with an extra in the shape of a stupendous and altogether marvellous and fatal plum pudding.

"Nothing could be more admirable than the heroism with which the Superintendent attacked that supper, although the balking of both Superintendent and lady at the plum pudding, appeared to lay upon the missionary the necessity of doing duty for the whole party, which he did by insisting upon a second supply. By the time the supper was over, the foreman and the men within hearing of the Superintendent's stories, were more than ready to listen to his sermon. The sermon was based upon those immortal words that have become known to Christian people the world over as the Golden Rule. And by no other words could he have got so quickly their sympathetic attention. From the study of the Golden Rule, it was easy to pass to the commendation of Him whose rule it was and whose whole life so conspicuously illustrated it. The closing hymn was 'The Sweet By and By,' and the men, standing up in the dim light of the smoky lanterns, sang it with no delicate shadings, but with throats full open. It was their only way of expressing their appreciation of the Superintendent and of his sermon, for there was no collection."

It was a large part of the Superintendent's duty to stimulate the liberality of his Western missions, and to develop their sense of independence. The following extracts from letters to Conveners will indicate the policy he followed and the ideals he set before his fellow-workers:

"In making appointments see that they are for a definite period, and that they terminate at a fixed date. Should it be found that a missionary is not acceptable, he should not be continued in the field, for his usefulness is impaired, and the field suffers. Every consideration must be given to all our missionaries, but the men are for the work, and not the work for the men. Every man should know, whether ordained or not, that if unacceptable the Church cannot carry him."

"Mr. M—— tells me the Presbyterians are about as strong at Wetaskiwin as the Methodists, and I wrote him saying that, if practicable, steps should be taken to build a church. I warned him against any union arrangement of any kind, and asked him to tell his people to reserve their strength for an effort of our own. It is most desirable that visibility should be given to our cause there and that the people should know that *we are not there simply on a visit.*"

"I want to call in to see you next week. I am going up to Rosedale which must become self-sustaining. It is situated in one of the best districts in the whole West, it has received long and generous help, it is in a good financial position and should go off the list unasked. If it has not spirit to do that, then it must be forcibly 'weaned.' I was at Franklin and they agreed to rise to $700 a year.

Dauphin should go off the list now, too, and Mekiwin, Arden, and Macdonald should call and soon be self-sustaining."

He was constantly being challenged and quizzed by members of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee upon the aid-receiving capacity of the Western Mission fields, until he became sensitive on this point, and he used to seize every opportunity to inculcate upon these missions the doctrine of self-support. In regard to this habit of his, a missionary writes :

"Our congregation was on the augmented list. He was not long in finding out by a few direct questions what the state of the congregation was. He soon asked :

"'When can you become self-sustaining?' And in parting he said, 'See that the calf does not suck the mother longer than is necessary,' and then added, 'The East is doing great things for the West, and the West must do all it can to help itself.'"

The Superintendent had an unfailing instinct for the right word in the right place, and he used to excite the admiration of his missionaries by getting congregations to do at his simple request what they had for weeks been begging them in vain to do.

Having received a report on one occasion, that a railway missionary had been unfortunate enough to "fall out" with his rough and ready congregation, the Superintendent paid a visit to the gravel-pit where the construction gang were working for the day. At the noon hour he obtained permission to address them. He discussed with them his never-failing theme, Home Missions, and to such good purpose that, before he had done, he had won the sympathy of the entire crowd.

"Now," he said, "men, we have sent you this summer our missionary, Mr. Blank, and I have no doubt he has given you faithful service. And we believe that you are willing to show your appreciation of that service and to help in this great work of Home Missions. I want some man to head a subscription list for the support of this summer's work."

Not a man moved. The Superintendent waited in silence. At length he called out, "Is there not a Presbyterian here? It's a queer crowd that has no Scotchman in it, or a 'blue nose,' or a 'herring-back' (men from the Maritime Provinces) and if there is that sort of Presbyterian here, it is the first time I ever knew him to refuse to support his Church or to pay his just debts."

It was not long before the subscription list was completed.

The Superintendent could be relentlessly severe when a congregation, or especially when a Board of Management, were detected trying to shirk duty and to escape responsibility. A congregation in a little Western town which was just emerging from a boom, found itself somewhat heavily in debt. The Superintendent visited the congregation and after the usual Home Mission address, called the Board of Management together and proceeded to investigate with the most searching minuteness. The financial side of the congregational life, the assets and liabilities, the methods of raising and of spending moneys, and finally the debt to the Church and Manse Board, all passed under strict review. The debt to the Church and Manse Board amounted to $600.

"Has the interest been paid?" inquired the Superintendent.

"No," said the Chairman, a young business man of the town.

"Has there been any attempt to pay it?"

"No," replied the young man, and proceeded to suggest that it really did not matter much about a debt of this kind; that, in fact, the Church and Manse Board might show a better spirit than to press a weak and struggling mission to pay this debt.

"Sir," said the Superintendent, and the vibrant voice took a deeper note and a richer burr, "the Presbyterian Church pays its debts, and any congregation proposing to repudiate the just claims against it must be prepared to write itself off the roll of Presbytery."

And such was the gleam of indignation that shot from under the shaggy eyebrows, that the unfortunate repudiator hastened to disclaim any intention of repudiation. And the whole Board united in a solemn promise to set about the raising of that debt with all possible speed.

There was one occasion, however, when the Superintendent took quite another tone with a congregation which he was visiting. The account is given by one who was present at that meeting. It was in a mission station of Northern Alberta.

"I remember well the day we drove from Innisfail to Olds. It was late in August, and the sun was shining in all its splendour upon magnificent fields of wheat. It was a sight to rejoice one's heart, but there was no rejoicing that day, for the night before a frost had fallen and the whole country was waiting anxiously to know the full extent of the injury. As the day wore on, the Doctor would now and then stop to examine the ears of grain. One could hardly have a more perfect symbol of smiling deception than those same fields of wheat so apparently rich in value, but so actually worthless for market. As the afternoon wore on, the certainty of total loss for the district became well established.

"The Superintendent was to address a meeting in a little schoolhouse not far from the village of Olds. As we drove up to the door, we could not fail to notice the gloomy faces of the men gathered outside. For many of them the failure of this crop was the blighting of their last hope. I wondered how he would handle that crowd. I shuddered as I thought of the possibility of his delivering his Home Mission address with its appeal for more liberal support. I need not have feared. The Superintendent knew his men, and more than any man of them felt the bitter disappointment of that day, for he bore the load of hundreds of like sufferers.

"At first there was no word of Home Missions, but with exquisitely tender emphasis he read the immortal words of the Master that have stood between so many discouraged hearts and despair. 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust doth corrupt. . . . Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. . . . Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. . . . Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink. . . . Behold the fowls of the air. . . . Your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. . . . Therefore, take no thought saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink. . . . Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' Then leaving the desk, he drew near them and began to comfort them like a father. He spoke of the things that were left, that no frost could touch, the eternal treasures which even here and now men may possess. And then he turned to his great theme, for he could not long be denied, and talked to them about 'the work we are carrying on in this country.' But never a word of depression or of discouragement did he utter. His statistics and his stories were all to show the triumphs of faith and endurance that irradiate the history of Western missions. His final words were those not often heard from his lips.

"'We are not here to-night to ask you for support, we are here to help. Don't be discouraged. Better days are sure to come. Be faithful to your Church. You cannot do much this year, but your Church will not forget you. Trust in your heavenly Father and hold on.'

"Even in the gathering gloom one could see the change wrought in the faces of his hearers. They were their own men again. The hopelessness was gone. Their vision of eternal things had pierced the clouds of disappointment and revealed the treasures that neither moth nor rust nor frost could take away. I had seen the Superintendent do many fine things, but never anything quite so fine as he did for those people that evening."

Dr. Robertson was gifted with the rare capacity for winning the confidence of men who might be supposed to be quite hostile to his cause and to himself. It was while he was making his first trip through Alberta and was soliciting subscriptions for the erection of a Church in connection with one of his mission stations, that he came upon a young Scotchman who rejected his appeal, asserting with an oath that he had never known a professing Christian "who wasn't a blank hypocrite anyway."

"Well," said the Superintendent, "I am sorry, sir, that you had such a poor mother."

"What do you mean, sir?" was the angry retort. "What do you know of my mother?"

"Was she a professing Christian?"

"She was."

"And was she a good woman?"

"She was that, but," feeling his equivocal position, "there are not many like her."

"We want to make Christians like your mother in this country, and that is why we are building this church."

Before the interview was over he had added another name to his subscription list.

He was greatly assisted in getting hold of men by his marvellous memory for faces, and missionaries all over the Western country relate instances of this remarkable faculty of his.

In Edmonton he was introduced to an ex-member of the Northwest Mounted Police.

"I know you, sir," said the Superintendent promptly.

"How is that? I never met you."

"Seven years ago I met you at McLeod."

The man was amazed. "Sure enough," he said, "I was orderly in the Barracks there at that time."

At the close of a service in Balmoral, Manitoba, an Englishman came up and said:

"You don't know me, but I wish to thank you for your address."

"Yes, I do know you," replied the Superintendent. "I saw you in Winnipeg in such a house on such a street, let me see, just seventeen years ago."

Needless to say, the man was perfectly astonished, for he remembered that he had lived in that house, at that time.

But perhaps the most remarkable of all the instances reported is that of a man whom the Superintendent came across in a mining camp in British Columbia. The young man was standing amid a crowd of his fellows, pouring forth a stream of profanity. The Superintendent stood looking at him steadily for a few moments, then went up to him and said gravely and sadly:

"Your godly father and mother would be grieved to see and hear you now."

"What do you know of my father and mother?" said the young man rudely. "You don't know me."

"Don't I? I ought to, for if I am not greatly mistaken, you were a lad in my Sabbath-school class in Woodstock twenty-two years ago."

Further conversation revealed this statement to be true. The young man was dumbfounded, and overwhelmed with shame.

"Yes," he acknowledged, "I was in that class." And afterwards, to the Superintendent alone, he told the sad tale of a careless and sinful life, ending with a promise of repentance and return.

This ability of his to grip and hold individuals even while he rebuked them for their sins, often gave him entrance to a crowd or a community that otherwise would have been closed to him. There is a famous story of an encounter he had with a young cowboy in Fort McLeod, which the old-timers of that town love to recount.

It was the Superintendent's first visit to that part of the country. Coming by the Lethbridge stage, he made the acquaintance of the stage-driver Jake, famous for his skill with the lines, famous also as a master of varied and picturesque profanity. Arriving at the stopping-place, the Superintendent gave his coat to the bartender, who tossed it into a corner behind the bar.

"Hold on there," said the Superintendent. "I have a bottle of lime juice in the pocket."

"Oh," replied the bartender with a wink (those were prohibition days), "I never heard it called that before," and nothing short of sampling would convince him of the harmless character of the beverage.

Later in the afternoon, the Superintendent was pinning up a notice of a service to be held on Sunday, the day following. A young fellow strode in, read the notice, glanced at the Superintendent, and immediately broke forth into a volley of oaths. The Superintendent listened quietly till he had finished, then said blandly:

"Is that the best you can do? You ought to hear Jake. You go to Jake. He'll give you points."

The derisive laughter that followed completely quenched the crestfallen young man. In the evening the Superintendent came upon him in the street, got into conversation with him, found he was of Presbyterian extraction, that he had been well brought up, but in that wild land had fallen into evil ways.

"Come now," said the Superintendent, "own up you were trying to bluff me this afternoon, weren't you?"

"Well, I guess so," was the shamefaced reply. "But you held over me."

"Now look here," replied the Superintendent, "you get me a good meeting to-morrow afternoon, and we'll call it square."

The young man promised, and next day's meeting proved him to be as good as his word.

But above all qualities that gave him his power over the people and enabled him to win and to hold their affection and their confidence to the very end of his life, was his genuine sympathy with them, arising from his intimate acquaintance with the conditions under which they lived. For by experience he came to know their trials, their hardships, their loneliness, their privations, their self-denials. And it was this sympathy that made him at once so truly their friend in the West and so mightily their advocate in the East.

XXX

PUBLIC MAN AND SCHOLAR

AMID the stress of missionary work the Superintendent found leisure for the study of public affairs and for the cultivation of an intelligent interest in the things pertaining to the development of national life.

In the performance of his duty it fell to him to criticise the Dominion Government's administration of Indian affairs, and especially to call attention to the very grave scandals arising out of the practices of some of the Agents employed by the Government upon the Indian Reserves. In 1886, he made a public statement in this connection in the city of Montreal, which produced a profound impression. In that public statement he accused the Government of neglecting its duties to the Indians, declaring that, in many places, the Indians were starving, and also Agents were employed who were "drunkards, gamblers, and rakes." The press gave the widest circulation to his statement. It was challenged by politicians defending the Government of the day. The following extract from the *Hansard* of 1886 gives the discussion upon the floor of the House of Commons at Ottawa:

Mr. Paterson (Brant)—"The Rev. Mr. Robertson, taking cognizance of some statements made by a gentleman in contradiction of what he stated, says: 'Mr. Andrews asks where are the Indians starving, searching refuse heaps and swill-barrels, and ravenously devouring crusts of bread and scraps of meat? At Minnedosa, Broadview, Birtle, Fort Qu'Appelle, Prince Albert, Battleford, Moosejaw, Medicine Hat, and the rest, I have seen them doing this. It might have been because they were curious, and preferred dirty crusts and decaying meat to tender, well-bled beef, but I did not think of accounting for it in that way. *I know the eager look*, *the shrunken form*, *and the wolfish face* that speak of want in the adult, and the wan, pinched look that speaks of starvation in the child; and I have seen them near Fort Ellice, Fort Pelly, File Hills, and other places, and have had my sympathies drawn out to the owners. I have seen Indians eating horses that died of disease, when the flesh was half-rotten. I have seen them picking up the entrails of animals about slaughter-houses when these were fast decomposing, ay, and eating them without cooking, or even washing. They may prefer such carrion to good beef, well-bled and cool when killed, but I doubt it.' This is the statement of Mr. Robertson to which he attaches his name in public print."

Mr. Ferguson (Leeds)—"I happen to know something about Rev. Mr. Robertson which I do not care to disclose or discuss here, and which does not add much to the weight of his statements on this subject. I am not going to say anything further on the point just now."

Mr. Fairbanks—"I rise to call attention to a very improper remark by an honourable gentleman opposite. He has spoken in reference to the Rev. Mr. Robertson, a gentleman with whom I happen to have a slight acquaintance, having met him in the discharge of his duties, having listened to his preaching, and knowing him well by reputation. When an honourable member stands up in this place and makes a remark like this—'I know something about Rev. Mr. Robertson which I do not care to disclose or discuss here, and which does not add much to the weight of his statements on this subject,' I submit that gentleman has either said too much or not enough."

Mr. Watson—"I would not have spoken at this late hour but for the insinuations on the other side of the House against the Rev. Mr. Robertson and the Rev. Jno. McDougall. . . . The Rev. Mr. Robertson I have known for ten years, and he is a man above reproach. He did not go to the Northwest on the same mission as the honourable member who has been slandering him . . . but for the purpose of doing good to the white settlers and Indians."

The General Assembly, taking up the question of Indian administration, passed a very strong resolution in support of Dr. Robertson's position, and called upon the Government to put an end to the scandals and to remove the unworthy Agents. And so deep was the feeling aroused throughout the whole country, that the Government appointed a Commissioner to inspect the Reserves and to inquire into the abuses, with the result that the charges made by the Superintendent were abundantly substantiated, and the necessary reforms at once instituted by the Government.

By instinct and by habit, Dr. Robertson was a student, with all the Scotchman's reverence for education. It is not surprising that from the very first he took an active interest in the educational affairs of Western Canada, and used his influence to establish on sound foundations both the University and the Public School system of education. He was for years a member of the Board of Education for Manitoba, and his advice was always listened to with respect. He strongly supported the movement to establish a Provincial University, in opposition to those who were pouring contempt upon what they termed a "University on paper." He was a staunch advocate of a national system of Public Schools, and by the advocacy of this system in Presbyteries, Synods, and General Assemblies, as well as in public addresses both in Eastern and Western Canada, he did much to strengthen public opinion in support of the principle that State funds should be appropriated to the support of only non-sectarian institutions. He saw clearly that for the future unity and homogeneity of the nation, the great agencies were the Church and the Public School. And at a critical period in the history of the great struggle to maintain our Public School system, the influence of Dr. Robertson did much to conserve for the Province this priceless possession. One phrase of his that appeared in his report to the Assembly of 1895 became a watchword in the campaign—"The dead hand has too long hampered the freedom of the living."

His desire to establish missions among the foreign peoples settling in the West arose out of, not only his loyalty to his Church and to her great mission to all classes of citizens, but out of this conviction as well, that it would be fatal to the national development to allow large sections of our country to remain untouched by the religious life of the majority of the Canadian people. At an early date in the history of the West he established missions among the Icelanders, Hungarians, Germans, Finns, and Scandinavians, not with the idea of making them Presbyterian, but simply to Canadianize these peoples and to develop in them the Christian ideals held by the people of Canada. The segregation of foreigners in large colonies he considered a mistaken policy.

After the establishment of the large Galician colonies in Western Canada, the Superintendent was anxious to find some means of approach by which these people could be reached. In faith they were about equally divided between the Greek and the Roman Catholic Churches, while the vast majority of those holding formally to the Roman Catholic Church practiced the Greek rite. The presence of large colonies of these people in Western Canada, for whose religious care no Church was making adequate provision, Dr. Robertson considered at once a challenge and a menace to Canadian Christianity. But for some years no avenue of approach seemed to open up. One evening there came to the Rev. C. W. Gordon's study two Galician students who expressed their eager desire that something should be done for their fellow-countrymen both in the matter of education and in regard to religious privileges. Mr. Gordon introduced the two young men to the Rev. Dr. King, Principal of Manitoba College. That clear-visioned educationist and statesman saw immediately the importance of this opening. The Superintendent was approached. At once an arrangement was made by which these young men were entered upon the roll of Manitoba College. There they received the special attention and teaching of the Principal, the Superintendent assuming the responsibility for their support. This was the beginning of the important work which the Presbyterian Church is carrying on among the Galician people of Western Canada. Within a year, schools were opened up among these people, and, before two years had passed, as a result largely of the effect of these schools and of the pressure brought to bear by the Presbyterian and other Churches, the Government of Manitoba so modified its educational policy as to allow the extension of the Public School system to the foreign populations within the Province.

One of the striking characteristics of the Superintendent was his interest in contemporary thought. Pressed as he was with the almost overwhelming details of his immediate work, he snatched precious minutes to dip into and devour the newest books.

"I was often surprised," says Principal Gordon, "at the amount of reading he used to get through on the railway. It was his only time for study, and far too precious to spend on the ordinary style of railway literature. He generally carried with him some new book, and kept himself well up in recent criticism and theology. Any minister who has enjoyed a quiet hour's talk with him must have been struck with his familiar knowledge and firm grasp of current questions."

A similar sentiment is expressed by the Rev. Dr. Ross:

"Another thing that impressed me was his grasp of problems outside his own work. I delighted to turn his conversation to subjects that I had been studying, that I might look at them with his eyes. I was often surprised to find him at home in some things that one would scarcely have expected him to know, *e. g.*, certain aspects of the Kenosis theory. He spent so much time travelling and his own work was so exhausting that he trained himself to take the heart out of a book in a little while, and all the time he was studying the subject in the light of the bearing which it had on some phase of life, thought, or work in the West. And the intense thought he had given to his own work had proved a splendid mental discipline for him."

He was interested in the study of Theology, but he was far more interested in religion than in Theology, and to those who knew him intimately it was always a pleasure to discuss theological questions and to note how Theology with him was ever related to the practical problems of living. This appears to have impressed President Falconer, who writes as follows:

"I was always much surprised at his grip upon theological problems and his modern attitude. . . . Religion was to him so much the dominant factor of life, and he was so sincere in his own, that he made Theology the living, real expression of this hidden religious life. That is what makes Theology vital; that will never allow practical men of Dr. Robertson's stamp to degenerate into ecclesiastics. And, in a living essential Theology of this nature, lies our hope for the future."

And Dr. Pollock says:

"Men do not appear at their best at our Assemblies. All that I could perceive of him there, was that he was a man swallowed up, as it were, by a great work. The practical side of life seemed to have absorbed all other sides of it, and he was filled with one idea, the vastness of the West and its necessities. After I knew him better I found that he was a thinker as well as a pioneer and practical worker."

Dr. Robertson was far more than a Churchman. He was a citizen of Canada, with a very practical interest in the development of the resources and industries of the nation. He was a warm personal friend of many of the leaders in the commercial and the industrial world. No man in Canada was more thoroughly acquainted with the West and its varied resources than was Dr. Robertson, and not infrequently was his advice sought and followed by men representing the largest business interests of the country. It is well known that even so large and important a corporation as the Canadian Pacific Railway, with whose chief officers he maintained throughout his life the most cordial relations, was more than once guided by his judgment. On one occasion the advice of Dr. Robertson was considered sufficiently weighty to determine the direction of one of the Company's branch lines. It was largely upon Dr. Robertson's suggestion that the Canadian Pacific Railway initiated that most happy and popular institution of winter excursions to Eastern Canada. And it was largely due to the Superintendent's ability to show the railway officials the important and favourable effect of Home Missions upon the material interests of the country in which their Company was so heavily involved, that they were prepared to grant missionaries transportation privileges, not only upon grounds of Christian courtesy, but also upon the basis of sound business principles.

Thus, such was his intellectual ability, his accurate and wide knowledge of Western Canada, his shrewd, practical common sense, and his lofty character, that Dr. Robertson was able to move amid the leaders of Canadian thought and enterprise as a man moves among his peers, and to command their entire confidence and respect.

XXXI

A LONG PULL

THE ten-years from 1887, when the General Assembly first met in Winnipeg, to 1897, when the Assembly revisited the Capital City of the West, were for the Superintendent years of unceasing and strenuous toil. During these years the lines of occupation were steadily advanced. From post to post, with slow progress at times, but with never a stop, the Church pushed on to take the new land. It was no summer jaunt, but a fierce and bitter conflict, in which the Western missionaries, led on by their great chief, paid out literally their life's blood unknown to the Church that sent them into the campaign. It was a great adventure. Great in its issues; it was for an empire and for an imperial base of world conquest for the Kingdom of Heaven. Great in its sacrifices; it demanded the lives of men and women, who, without thought of heroism or of aught but duty and privilege, gladly laid them down. Great in its triumphs; for in spite of losses and failures, the line of advance never wavered, but moved steadily forward till everywhere in Western Canada floated the banner of the Church. But great as was the triumph and worthy of all the sacrifice, it is sad and humiliating to look back and see how unnecessary much of this sacrifice was; for the simple fact emerges from the records that never for a single year did the Church furnish adequate supplies to those conducting the campaign. There was never enough money and never enough men.

It was during the Assembly's excursion to the Pacific Coast in 1887 that the Superintendent was approached in regard to his accepting an honorary degree, and, in the year following, the Presbyterian College of Montreal did itself honour in honouring the Superintendent of Missions for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories with the title of Doctor of Divinity. The granting of this honour is a significant indication that the Superintendent was coming to his place in the estimation of the Church.

In his report for that year, his Western field was described as reaching from White River, on the north shore of Lake Superior, to Revelstoke, in the mountains of British Columbia, 1,800 miles long by 350 wide; and as a result of the work of the five great years preceding, he was able to say, with surely pardonable pride, that there was no settlement of any size, along the line of railway, but was reached in some way with Gospel ordinances. The population of Manitoba at this time had risen to 108,640, a gain of 74.5 % in five years. Of this population the Presbyterian Church claimed 28,406, a gain of 104.4 %, leading all others by 5,200. This vast field was organized into five Presbyteries—Winnipeg, Brandon, Rock Lake, Regina, and Calgary, exclusive of the Presbytery of Columbia—and manned by 149 workers of all kinds. But every year settlement pushed on into the unclaimed wilds, and hard upon the heels of settlement followed the Church.

In 1889, such is the development in the northern and western portions of the Presbyteries of Brandon and Regina, that reorganization is necessary, and the new Presbytery of Minnedosa is formed. In the following year, the building of the Calgary and Edmonton line of railway opens up Northern Alberta, and the Superintendent is discovered, as we should expect, far beyond the limit of construction, planting new missions in anticipation of settlement. A characteristic letter gives an account of his return to civilization:

"*Calgary, Nov. —, 1890.*

"MY DEAR MR. MCQUEEN:—

"Got a good start on Monday and reached Ramsey's for the night. Wolf Creek was reached for dinner Tuesday and Red Deer in the evening. Hearing that a train was going out early in the morning—likely the last for the season—I went down to Gaetzboro and found camp-fires, men, mules and horses, all over the site of the future city. Finding no better place to rest, I went into a box-car and got a three hours' sleep. The cries of teamsters loading stock soon compelled me to get up. Breakfast was got under circumstances not very appetizing, and I was prepared for the journey. After the usual shunting, delays and false starts, we got off and reached here at 15.45.

"Saw McLellan at Red Deer for a short time. Financial outlook there gloomy. He boarded the missionary, but got nothing, nor was anything raised for anybody. The missionary's conduct is inexplicable, for he had printed instructions. The board may be paid, but nothing more. An ordained man must be planted at the Red Deer, one who will work up the field. The town will be put on the market next spring, and settlement is likely to increase. I find that a good deal of land is being taken up, and that settlement will likely proceed steadily.

"I shall submit the financial situation at Fort Saskatchewan, etc., to Presbytery to-morrow and write you afterwards.

"With kind regards to Mrs. McQueen and yourself, and many thanks for your hospitality and friendliness,

"In haste,

"J. ROBERTSON."

In 1890, he paid a visit to British Columbia and was humiliated and disgusted to find that on the railway not a passenger knew of any Presbyterian missionary or Presbyterian church in the mountains, except that one unusually bright youth "had heard tell of a Presbyterian parson on the Coast somewheres." But more than this, the Superintendent was shocked beyond measure during his trip through British Columbia, at the terrible evidences of neglect everywhere apparent in the interior districts of the

Province. As a result of this visit, the Columbia Presbytery made a request that his constituency should be extended to include British Columbia. At the General Assembly of the same year this was done, and with such good result that, two years later, the Assembly was called upon to erect the Synod of British Columbia, consisting of the three Presbyteries of Vancouver Island, Westminster, and Kootenay, together with the Presbytery of Calgary. His mission territory now extended from White River, Ontario, to the Pacific, but his field of operations knew no limits other than those that marked the boundaries of the Dominion. The including of British Columbia within his constituency meant a wider sphere of influence and greater opportunities of service, but it demanded, as well, longer and more toilsome journeys, larger expenditure of vital energy, and more complete sacrifice of family ties. He was reaching more nearly the ideal set forth in those sweeping words, "Yea, and his own life also."

So great had been the growth of settlement in the older sections of the West that the Assembly of 1894 was asked to erect four new Presbyteries—Superior, Portage la Prairie, Melita, and Glenboro—making thirteen in all. But in spite of all he had been able to accomplish, the Superintendent was forced to lament in his report for the year that there were 25,000 Presbyterians somewhere in the West uncared for by the Church. It was a startling announcement, but with no very visible effect, for the Church in Canada was but slowly waking to its responsibility and its opportunity.

Two years later, in 1896, the Presbytery of Edmonton was erected, the most northerly in Canada, possibly in the world. When one considers the rapidity of expansion, one is not surprised that the Church should lag behind, for never in the history of Christendom was there ever such a pace set for the advancing line of Christian conquest.

In these ten years the mission fields went up from 81 to 176, a gain of over 100 % ; the preaching stations from 335 to 652, a gain of nearly 100 % ; the church buildings from 68 to 172, a gain of 152 % ; the families from 3,148 to 5,926, a gain of over 88 % ; the communicants from 3,956 to 6,773, a gain of over 71 %. No wonder the Superintendent almost had to break his heart in his endeavour to secure men. No wonder the Home Mission and Augmentation Committees had to appear before General Assembly repeating year after year the disappointing story of successive deficits. While his Committees loyally supported him, it was the Superintendent in the long run who had to bear the brunt of the fight for the securing of men and means, and it is sad to remember that, strive as he might, the spectre of inadequate supply haunted him for the greater part of his life.

There was also a continuous struggle for funds. In 1888, for Western work, the Home Mission and Augmentation Committees expended in grants alone over $25,000, and yet were forced to report to the Assembly a deficit. In the following year the deficit for Home Missions was $745, and for Augmentation the very considerable sum of $3,768. These deficits sent the Superintendent on a tour throughout the Maritime Provinces in the autumn of that year. The story of a bit of that eager hunt is packed into a characteristic letter to his wife written from Amherst, N. S., under date of November 20, 1889:

"My dear Wife: —

"I have not had a letter from home for a long time, but I hope you are all well. I am as busy as I can well be, in corresponding and holding meetings. Eleven meetings per week is about the average, and I will soon have visited most of the congregations of any size or substance down here. I have no appointments beyond the 5th of December, so that I hope to get home by the 8th or 10th. The meetings here have been quite as successful as I expected, and I look for $4,000 or $5,000 unless they have all been lying, which I cannot believe. I feel, too, that a permanent interest in Western work is created, and that we shall have a perennial source of funds. The people have been most hospitable and cordial in their reception of me everywhere. I shall go back with the kindest feelings towards all of them."

"Eleven meetings per week!" This might satisfy even so insatiable a worker as the Superintendent, but the empty hours between meetings he fills in with his interminable correspondence. Not till after it was too late, did his Church realize how much she might have prolonged his life and extended his usefulness had she furnished him with a secretary. "Four or five thousand dollars!" Yes, and a great deal more money does he carry from the loyal, warm-hearted men of the sea-provinces, and "warm feelings" that have never chilled to this present. Those provinces have bred great men for Canada, and they were great enough to know one of their own kind when he appeared among them. But in spite of the Superintendent's tours, in spite of the energy and eloquence of the indefatigable Conveners of Home Mission and Augmentation, Dr. Cochrane and Rev. D. J. Macdonnell, in spite of the financial ability of the Secretary, Dr. Warden, this deficit continues to clog the westward march of the Church.

The General Assembly of 1890 is informed that with deep regret the Committee has found it necessary to reduce the salaries in Augmented charges because of insufficient funds. The General Assembly energetically proceeds to legislate, but the deficits continue.

In 1891 the matter is considered serious enough to warrant a Pastoral Letter from the Moderator. The spectre, however, will not be laid, but insists on appearing the following year with the Augmentation report. The situation is desperate enough to harden the tender heart of the Secretary of the Committee, who proposes strenuous regulations governing Augmented congregations, and a reduction of grants. But after the Superintendent has pointed out that the West is doing its best, contributing the past year some $238,000, one-ninth of the entire revenue of the Church, and after he has given the Assembly some vivid and pathetic pictures of the interiors of manses in Augmented charges, the Assembly will not listen to the proposed regulations, much less to reductions in salary. The regulations remain unchanged. A second council of despair to reduce Augmented salaries by thirty dollars, the Superintendent also succeeds in having rejected, and the salaries remain at their normal and surely meagre enough minimum. There being no other hope, the Assembly orders another Pastoral Letter, to be backed up by Deputies to Presbyteries.

Leaving the Pastoral Letter and the Deputies to their work, the Superintendent again takes the trail. We find him in the late autumn in the neighbourhood of Yorkton, in Northern Assiniboia. His experiences in this district are set down in a letter to his wife, of date November 19, 1892, and are worth recording:

"I had a stormy time in the West. Left Winnipeg Saturday, and reached Saltcoats about 10 P. M. A man frantically came on board the train and shouted if Dr. Robertson was on board. I assured him he was. He then told me I would have to come off and marry a couple. This I declined to do until I could see the conductor. I told him the situation and got him to stop the train till I could marry these good people, and the conductor went with me to the hotel. But the bride was in the kitchen working, ignorant of what was coming. She was taken away, hurriedly washed and dressed and ushered into my presence. She belonged to the Crofters, and I had to marry partly in Gaelic and partly in English, but finally got them made one. Started for the station, and got to Yorkton in good time. But when I reached there I found the minister absent, and no place where I could stop, and the night wild. I hunted round and got a place about twelve o'clock, but when I went to the room I found it was recently plastered, and that it was not safe. I at last had a place pointed out to me where the people had gone to bed. I knocked at the door and a woman appeared. She had no place. I told her I never saw a woman stuck yet in such an emergency, and that I was quite prepared to sleep on the table or on the floor. She invited me to go in, which I did. She went away leaving me in the dark, and came back telling me the best she could do was to let me in beside her husband. I went, and slept soundly, not looking who slept on the other side of him, but there were three in bed, as I found in the morning.

"Morning stormy, but I hired a horse and drove out eight miles. Found missionary storm-bound, and not going to station beyond at all. I told him I would go, and instructed driver to take me there. Found a small congregation, but was glad I went. Preached, and returned to where the missionary was. He had Communion service, and I preached and addressed people. Missionary remained all night, and I returned to evening service. Waited to have the Crofter missionary come and take me down there. He did not come, and I hired and drove there. Found that the storm was too much for him, too, and that he never left the house Sabbath. Drove to Saltcoats, seventeen miles, and went next morning to Crofters.

They are badly off. I do wish you would try to get some of your ladies to get some clothing. There are twenty-three families. No crop, not even potatoes. Held a meeting that night at Saltcoats. Next day came to Neepawa and held Thanksgiving service, and another in evening at Rapid City. Got promise of twenty-five bags of flour for Crofters."

The Christmas season of that year finds him still pursuing with invincible pertinacity the storm-blown trails of the far Northwest. The following letters written to his wife give us a realistic picture of how his days were packed with work. There is something almost appalling in that record of journeys and meetings. One does not know whether to wonder more at that restless, resistless energy that drove him through his work, or the invincible buoyancy of spirit that made him indifferent to toil, privation, and hardship. The first letter is written from Calgary some time in the early part of December and is as follows :

"The Horse Hills meeting was well attended. Thence we drove to the Sturgeon, but on the way our conveyance —a jumper—broke down. In the old days we could easily have mended it, for every one had his pocket full of shaganappi and 'babeesh' (babiche), but, alas ! these days are past and there was nothing for it but to try to take pieces out of the harness ; were successful, but spent so much time that we lost our supper. The meeting was largely attended and much interest shown. After the meeting I visited an old acquaintance, Sutherland, who lost his wife a year ago, and who fell into a threshing machine and saved his life by his extraordinary strength. He is crippled for life, but quite cheerful. His daughter was away and he could not give us anything to eat. We did not tell him we had no supper. At eleven we started to drive twelve miles to Edmonton, and reached it in good time. On the evening of the next day I addressed the Edmonton people on mission work, and they had a social gathering afterwards. I saw quite a number of old faces and spent a pleasant time.

"Till Sabbath I spent my time visiting South Edmonton, and addressing the people, and organizing a mission. Preached twice in Edmonton and once in South Edmonton on Sabbath, and explored Monday. Tuesday I started for Lacombe, and had a meeting in the railway station. Wednesday drove eighteen miles south to Red Deer and held a meeting, and on Thursday, eighteen miles here. Last night we tried to reach Olds, eighteen miles southwest, but the driver failed to reach there and we nearly spent the night on the prairie. The missionary did his best to get me through, but in vain. Stars were hidden and we steered by instinct, or rather I did, for he got confused and lost his bearings. We got within about three miles of the place and fell into such drifts that it was deemed prudent to retrace our steps. We reached here about 1 A. M. Mrs. Buchanan and two other ladies—young women—were here when we arrived and asked us whether we lost ourselves. We replied no, that we were here. Had we lost the trail, then? Could we lose what we never had?

"To-morrow we have the Communion dispensed here. Monday I go north to Wetaskiwin, and return to Calgary, Tuesday. I then go to Canmore, and return to Olds. On the 24th I go to McLeod where I was to get a dish of ancient eggs a few years ago, but did not. I then return, after visiting Pincher Creek, and go to Prince Albert. I return and go down along the line of the Canadian Pacific expecting to reach Winnipeg about the 11th.

"I do not know how long after, ere I get to Ontario, but likely not very long.

"To this district a large number of settlers are coming, and where we have four missions now, we shall have nine next spring."

One would think that after that terrific tour, packed with "organizing," "addressing," "visiting," "exploring," dashing through storms and drifts, bearing cold and hunger, sleepless nights and disappointments, the Superintendent had earned his right to a week's rest in his home with his family. But he cannot reach them and return to his work without a journey of 5,000 miles, consuming twelve or fourteen precious days and costing more money than he has to spend. So he closes the letter with the words:

"I was glad to get so much home news. I hope you are all well. I am sorry not to be at home on Christmas Day."

On the 22d of December he writes from Calgary as follows:

"I have just got in from Olds, forty miles north, where I held a meeting yesterday, and I go over to-morrow morning to McLeod, over 100 miles. The weather is very cold and stormy, and travelling uncomfortable. Monday I have to go up from McLeod to Pincher Creek, a distance of thirty-two miles, and I fear it will not be comfortable travelling. I expect to return to McLeod Wednesday to take the train back here. While at Edmonton I had fine weather and enjoyed the trip. From here I go to Prince Albert, and it is likely the weather there is keen. However, I shall soon get through there. I have had word necessitating, I fear, my taking a trip to Southeastern Assiniboia after returning from Prince Albert, and if I do, I cannot go East when I expected. From Herdman I learned that the Synod of British Columbia meets in March. I want to be present for various reasons, and in that case it is scarcely worth while to go East till March when I go to the meeting of the Home

Mission Committee. However, I shall decide nothing now, as much depends on how matters shape themselves for the next two weeks."

It is because this man will not rest by day or night that his Committee find it difficult to furnish him with either men or money.

Before the Assembly of the following year, the Superintendent found time to make a memorable trip down the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. Appointments had been made at various points throughout that district. Meantime, the Fraser, swollen by the June rains, had burst its banks and rendered all the low-lying ground almost impassable. But the Superintendent was not to be denied. He must keep his engagements at all costs and at all hazards. And keep them he does. He gives an account of some of his experiences in the following letter to his wife:

"*Calgary, June 7, 1893.*

"DEAR WIFE:—

"I reached here about an hour ago, intending to wait for the meeting of Presbytery here to-morrow. The trip in British Columbia was, on the whole, rough, owing to the late spring and the shocking state of the roads, but appointments were in every case kept, and I have reason to be thankful. I walked till my feet gave way, rode where I could, drove where it was practicable, took canoe, rowboat, steamer, and train. Had I a chance to try a balloon I would have tested and tasted all the usual methods of travel. No doubt I would have fared better had I been web-footed on several occasions, but in the absence of the webbed foot I was glad to own feet sufficiently large to prevent me from sinking everywhere. For the first time in almost twenty years I got drenched to the skin, and had the luxury of sitting in the bottom of a canoe for hours, which was constantly shipping enough of the tawny Fraser to sink it, but for frequent bailing. And when I tried to buy a suit of underclothing I was denied the privilege, and helped myself of the shelf without leave. But so far I have escaped arrest.

"After business is over here I go to Winnipeg, where I am to remain for a day, and then I go East. Kisses for Mamma, Tina, Jim, Stan and Terry.

"YOUR HUSBAND."

That year the Home Mission Fund is saved by a lucky bequest, but no such good fortune befalling the Augmentation Fund, the annual deficit with the consequent reduction in salary, is reported to the Assembly, the Convener taking occasion sadly to remind the Church that for years past this average deficit in the Fund has amounted to almost $4,000 per annum. That is one side of the picture. The other side is presented by the Superintendent who, in his address, gives an account of all his various journeyings and labours, reports expansion and consolidation, calls attention to the ominous presence of a colony of 700 Mormons in Southern Alberta, and with this last item of information presents a resolution of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee asking that a mission be established among these people. The Assembly, however, has no money for Presbyterians, much less for Mormons, and the resolution of the Committee is hastily forgotten. The Superintendent gives a stirring report of mining activity in British Columbia, and demands the attention of the Church for incoming miners. But all to no purpose. The Home Mission Fund has been practically wiped out, the Augmentation Fund is in an even less healthy condition, necessitating a cut in salaries. The miners, too, must be forgotten. The Superintendent further announces that the immigration for the year has reached the inspiring figure of 38,000, and that development will be rapid in the spring. The Assembly is duly inspired, but is hopeless in regard to funds.

The horizon is somewhat dark, but at one point there is a light breaking. The Convener reports that during the past year he had issued a commission to the Rev. C. W. Gordon, who, on his return from his mission in the mountains a year ago, had proceeded to Britain for a year's study, after which he had been spending some months in presenting the claims of the Northwest to the Churches in the Homeland. Mr. Gordon had received so hearty a welcome and was meeting with such large success, that the Convener was hopeful that very substantial help would be given by the British Churches. The Assembly is greatly relieved and much rejoiced that at length the home Churches are beginning to take an interest in their children over seas, passes resolutions and dissolves, much comforted.

The financial depression continues throughout the year, and into 1894. The Home Mission Committee meets the Assembly with the gloomy announcement that the receipts of the Fund have been $6,000 less than those of last year, and that the situation has been saved only by special donations and grants from Churches abroad. The Augmentation Fund, too, is in a deplorable condition, the only relief in the situation being achieved by the simple but hardly satisfactory method of a further cut in salaries.

The Superintendent reports a large increase in the Mormon colony in Alberta, so large, indeed, that the Calgary Presbytery was constrained on its own motion to inaugurate a mission, the funds for which had been secured by the Superintendent. Work had been begun, too, among the foreign peoples who were settling in the West. Two missionaries were to work among the Icelanders, one among the Hungarians, one among the Germans, one among the Scandinavians. All this involved the Church in larger expenditure. Retrenchment was impossible. The Church must advance. But how to advance without funds, the Assembly knows not.

The return of their deputy from the British Churches is most opportune. Mr. Gordon is warmly received as he presents his report. And a remarkable report it is. Great Britain, but especially Scotland, is the happy hunting-ground for all impecunious missionary schemes. It had been difficult to gain access to the congregations, but access having been effected through the good offices of the various Colonial Committees and of personal friends deeply interested in Canada, the Northwest and its magnificent appeal had touched the hearts and the imaginations of the people. To such an extent was this true, that Mr. Gordon was able to report the assuming of the support of between forty and fifty missions on the part of the British Churches for a period of from three to five years at $250 each. This truly generous response on the part of the home Churches, dissipates in large measure the financial gloom overhanging the Home Mission situation, and encourages the Superintendent and those associated with him to a still more vigorous prosecution of their work.

In 1895 the Church manifests its appreciation of the Superintendent and his work by unanimously electing him to the highest office within its gift. It has been a hard year financially throughout the Dominion, and the West has not escaped the general financial stringency. In British Columbia there have been serious floods on the Fraser, and a large section of the country is, therefore, in straits. The Superintendent reports that the immigration for the year shows a slight increase, that opportunities are greater than ever, the needs of the country also greater. In the Cariboo district, with a population of 3,000, about half that number are Presbyterian, and without a single missionary. Work among the Mormons is proving more difficult than was anticipated. Its progress is not satisfactory, but it cannot be abandoned.

The work among the foreigners, too, is making larger demands. With the help of Old Country moneys, however, the year closes without a deficit.

The election of Dr. G. L. Mackay in 1894, and of Dr. Robertson in 1895, the outstanding representatives of the Foreign and Home Mission fields, to the office of Moderator, had brought these two great departments of Church work into prominence and inevitably, to a certain extent, into competition for the attention and support of the Church. On retiring from the office, the great representative of Foreign Missions had preached a powerful sermon, setting forth the claims and the opportunities of that work to which he had given his life. In accepting office, the great representative of Home Missions in the Canadian Church made the following graceful reference to Foreign Mission work :

"These are two sisters, the one is younger or perhaps has more charms than the other, still an elder sister has a warm place in the heart of the Church, and that we found when an effort was put forth recently to relieve the Home Mission deficit."

For his retiring sermon he chose a text usually selected for a Foreign Mission address : "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you ; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

The sermon was a noble exposition of the principles underlying all mission work, and a splendid apology for the view that held all mission work to be one. But, as was expected of him, he proceeded to give a lucid and comprehensive review of the work accomplished in the Canadian West during the past fifteen years. It was a sermon worthy of the great theme, and some of its periods deserved to live in the memory of the Church. And it is to be regretted that no report remains beyond a single reference in the press of the day, to the strength and dignity of the utterance. In dealing with the difficulty of overlapping, the following sentences are preserved. After frank acknowledgment of the evil, he proceeds to say:

"Overlapping could have been prevented in many cases, and the evil mitigated if our own Church had made up its mind to occupy its missions continuously. The withdrawal of forty or fifty missions in the autumn, leaving families like sheep without a shepherd, is an invitation to another Church to step in—an invitation seldom declined.

"There is some overlapping, but less than is commonly reported. The returns to Assembly show good value for money spent. No good money thrown into muskegs. But where there is overlapping is *our* Church always the offender? We offend less than some others. But if we occupy a field, build a church, etc., etc., are we to sneak away because others come in? There is no breach of Christian comity. A timid, questioning, penurious policy can only win contempt and defeat. Moreover, Presbyterianism represents principles that have done man and religion rare service in the past—are these not to find expression and exposition all over the West? To play their part in shaping the national life? Let overlapping be reduced to a minimum, but let no deserving group of Presbyterians complain that their Church had forsaken them, suppressed her principles to save her pocket."

There is a ring of sturdy manliness about this declaration that cannot fail to win the approval of all self-respecting Presbyterians. In a single paragraph the sermon depicts the marvellous growth of twenty-one years:

"Since the union, twenty-one years ago, over 200 missions have become congregations. Under our charge are 400 missions still, with 1,200 stations (one-sixth of the families of the Church, one-ninth of her communicants). Twenty years ago, one feeble Presbytery in the West, now thirteen. Preaching places increased from 35 to 818, communicants from 500 to 19,000. The strength and prestige of the Church are increased by these gains, enabling her to undertake and carry out work that else would have been far beyond her. The spiritual life is deepening; not one point has been abandoned; the religious barometer is rising."

It is a great Home Mission Assembly, but the report from the Home Mission Committee is not calculated to quicken the enthusiasm. While the year closes with a balance of $4,000 to the good, this is not due to increased liberality on the part of the Church, but rather to the practice of the severest economy in administration, and to the liberal assistance from British Churches. The Convener, Dr. Cochrane, finds it necessary to warn the Assembly solemnly that unless the support of the Church for this branch of its work reach a point far above any yet touched, retrenchment is inevitable.

But there is no idea of retrenchment in the mind of the Superintendent, nor in the minds of the men in the West. Indeed, retrenchment is the last thing thought of there. The Calgary Presbytery has grown too big for satisfactory administration, and hence upon its northern confines the new Presbytery of Edmonton is erected, making fourteen in all now in that part of Canada lying west of the Great Lakes. All this expansion means larger financial support, and realizing how inadequate are the present sources of supply, and remembering that in some cases the period of supporting their missions on the part of Churches in Britain secured by Mr. Gordon has elapsed, the Committee resolves to send their Superintendent as a deputy to the Motherland, to lay the facts before the Churches there, and to invite their continued support and, if possible, in even larger measure.

There was another cause that weighed with the Committee, and one, the ominous significance of which at the time was not fully understood. There were all too evident signs upon the Superintendent of Missions that his iron constitution and sinewy frame were at last beginning to feel the strain of those fifteen years of toils and trials immeasurable. And so he was sent across the sea for a change and rest, they said. A change it was, true enough; but rest was to him impossible while his work was undone.

In the autumn of 1896, Dr. Robertson sailed for Scotland, and with the interval of but a single Sabbath, set out at once on his quest for money. His first difficulty, and it proved his greatest, was to get access to the people. The way was blocked; the Church treasurer or the minister not unfrequently stood on guard. Then, too, there were countless prior claims pressed upon the Christians of Scotland. To Mr. Gordon he writes some weeks after his arrival, as follows:

"The Established Church people have a large Foreign Mission debt, and are holding meetings in every centre and canvassing in every quarter to wipe it out. It would seem, from what was said here by Lord Low, Lord Polwarth, Dr. Macgregor, Dr. McLeod, and others, that the good name of the Church was involved, and for honour men will fight, when they would not even strive to enter in at the strait gate. And the Free Church and the United Presbyterian have their Foreign Mission deficits, too, and debt is heard from all parts of the land. And in Edinburgh, central congregations are losing by removal to the suburbs, and the suburbs have to build more spacious and pretentious structures to attract and accommodate the newcomers, and neither class feels able to assume new burdens. And, truth to tell, ministers are not enthusiastic over the scheme. Nothing could be finer than the spirit shown in the Presbytery, but when you ask for an opportunity of addressing the congregation—well, that is another matter."

Further on he says:

"This seems the happy hunting-ground for all schemes and plans. Has an Irish minister a church to build, a manse to repair, or a hall to roof, he must come to Glasgow. Has a Highlander lost his cow, his boat, or his bonnet, he must come to Glasgow to get wherewith to buy a new one. And as for Colonial schemes, French Canadians, Chiniquy, the Cape, West Australia, Canadian Northwest, they all and a dozen other schemes present their claims, and this every year, besides Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Home Missions, Church building, Foreign Missions. The trouble is that a select few are always approached, while a large number of comfortable people are not come-at-able. But Pessimism never helped a cause, and I am not going to say anything more of this."

There is no strain of pessimism or of cowardice in his blood, and so, making no complaint, but calling upon all his resources of full and detailed knowledge, of courtesy and tact, of skill and energy, he goes at his work till by sheer dogged perseverance he makes his way into the pulpit and thence in short order into the hearts of his hearers. The following extract from a letter to his wife makes good reading to us who love to remember his manner with the people:

"Last Sabbath the minister in introducing me said he did not think they could give anything, but that I wished to address them and that he could not well refuse, but that while they could give no money they would give their moral support and their prayers! What could you do after that? I was nettled and spoke out. I told them that if they would talk in that way, they must allow me to analyze their case. If they could give but simply would not, how much was their moral support worth? A good deal less than nothing. And if they were to pray, they should be able to say, 'Lord, Thou knowest we have nothing and cannot help this work, deserving as we believe it to be; incline the hearts of those who have, to help it forward.' God would hear such a prayer, but I was afraid He would have little patience with the man who prayed that others less able might give to save his pocket. Some smiled aloud and Professor D——, who was present, said that whatever the minister said, they would try to see what could be done. He was much pleased with the presentation of the case, and promised help."

The good people of Scotland are a long-suffering and much-hunted folk, but they are people of sense and of conscience. None in the world know better a good investment, and none in the world respond more readily to the claims of the Kingdom of Heaven. Towards the end of his stay, he writes as follows in regard to the results of his mission:

"Edinburgh has responded fairly. A number of them thought that three years would end the matter, and since these have come to an end, they are of the opinion that no more should be asked. Dr. Hood Wilson's people promised, as you know, for three years, but will go on. St. Andrew's 'ditto.' Dr. John Smith was telling me his people were much interested, and that I might depend on their continuing theirs, too. A week ago last Sabbath I was in Free St. George's, and I am informed they will continue. Dr. Barbour told me he would give £50 as for the past three years, and give me £100 this year for the Building Fund. Sheriff Jamieson gives me £10 a year for five years for the Building Fund. Drummond's people (United Presbyterian, Lothian Road) will continue, and Mr. Williamson's people who gave nothing last year, are taking the matter up and will report. I told you, I think, Morningside Free Church promises £60 for three years. . . . I addressed Dr. Donald McLeod's congregation last Sabbath. He brusquely told me in the vestry not to ask for money, for they had none to give. He took the devotional part of the service, but gave me twenty-five minutes, then I was to engage in prayer, give out a hymn to sing, and pronounce the benediction. After the hymn was sung he came to the front of the platform, told the people what he had said to me, but frankly stated that the address had caused him to change his mind. He offered to be one of twenty-five to give £2 a year, and quite an amount was got at the close. He told me yesterday he was to follow the matter up to-morrow, and expected to get the balance of the £50. Lord Overtoun I saw, and he gave me £200 for building, and promised to give £100 a year for the next four years, part for building and part for support of a missionary, as we might decide. I think £50 should go for each. Mr. R. S. Allan gives me £100 for building, and I have promises of more, but can tell nothing as yet as to how they will pan out."

It is impossible for him to map out any orderly itinerary. He must suit other people's convenience rather than his own, and go where and when he can find entrance. So from Glasgow to Dundee, from Dundee to Edinburgh, from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, from Aberdeen to London, from London to Liverpool, he journeys, and having completed his work in England and Scotland, he crosses over to Ireland for a short but vigorous campaign there. It is hard work and often discouraging. Sabbath-days and week-days he fills in with addresses, sermons, interviews, journeyings and unceasing correspondence, till done out, he takes steamer for home.

On his homeward trip, unfitted as he is for the sea-voyage, he falls terribly ill. But once on land, his strength quickly returns and he hurries across the continent to Winnipeg, where he appears once more in the midst of his brethren convened in General Assembly, and receives such a welcome from them as it is given few men to receive.

The Assembly is busy with its legislation, but nothing will do but that he shall stand up where they can see him and listen once more to his voice. He cannot report any great improvement in health, and we can all see that he is worn and weary, but he has met with great kindness and his visit has not been without success. In the evening, in a speech of great vigour, he recounts his experiences in the Homeland. He has made money out of it for the Church, nearly $12,000, and support for over forty missions. But the Church is doubtful whether it has not paid somewhat too dearly for these financial returns, in the expenditure of the life and strength of the Superintendent of Missions.

XXXII

THE LAST GREAT ADVENTURE—THE YUKON

IN the summer of 1897 the eyes of the civilized world were suddenly turned upon that part of the Dominion lying between Alaska and the Rocky Mountains, the Yukon. One word whispered on the banks of the Klondike River reverberated around the world, the magic, mighty word "gold." From all the continents and from the islands of the sea, they came, men of all nations, of all colours, of all tongues, crowding, pressing, struggling, fighting their way to the placer gravel reaches of the Klondike and its various tributaries. At first in scores, then in hundreds, then in thousands and in tens of thousands, they flooded the river-bottoms, digging, scratching, washing, fighting for gold. It was in some ways the wildest, maddest rush ever seen on this continent. At first the more reckless and adventurous only pressed in, but as the gold began to flow out, mad lust seized upon cool-headed and sober business men from all parts of the world.

They are all interested in gold. But there was one man who had stood upon the Vancouver wharves piled high with outfits and stores, eagerly scanning the crowds of gold-seekers fighting for a place on the outgoing steamers, in whose heart there was no thought of gold, but of men. That man was James Robertson, the Superintendent of Western Missions for Canada.

Already ten thousand men, some said twenty, had gone north to tear their fortunes from the frozen placer-beds of the Klondike, and with them had gone the rumseller, the gambler, the courtezan, the pimp, the vile parasitic vermin from the city slums, but not a single missionary. The thought kindled a fire in his heart that burned ever hotter and fiercer. Something must be done, and that straightway.

On his way back from the Pacific Coast he paused at Winnipeg and there consulted with the Rev. C. W. Gordon, who was at that time secretary of the British Canadian Missions, and was acting as assistant to the Superintendent in his Western work. What was to be done? Plainly only one thing. A man must be selected, outfitted and sent north forthwith. Navigation would soon close in that northland, rendering travel difficult. It was necessary to act at once. True, it was a matter for the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, but long before that Committee could meet, the time for action would be past. The Superintendent could trust the Committee to support him in wise action. So to find the man.

In Mr. Gordon's study they sat, the Blue Book on the table, the Superintendent canvassing the names of available men one by one. Not every man would do for this mission. He must be a man of physical strength, sound in wind and limb, of common sense, sane and strong. He must possess high moral courage, lofty spirituality, tender sympathy; moreover, he must be unmarried. One by one the Superintendent named the men, rejecting one after another for various causes.

"Mr. A too weak, Mr. B too lazy, Mr. C cannot be spared from his present position, Mr. D married, Mr. E too worldly, could not be trusted in the presence of gold, Mr. F too fat, couldn't climb the hills, Mr. G too colourless in his theology, not positive enough, Mr. H not enough red blood in his heart, no sympathy."

And so through the list. The suitable are needed in their present positions; those who can be spared are unsuitable for this first adventure. What of the graduating men in the colleges? None that the Superintendent knows to be suitable can be found in the East. What of Manitoba College? Surely in this Western college it is, if anywhere, the man should be found. But in the graduating class no suitable man appears. Suddenly there comes to Mr. Gordon the suggestion of a name.

"I know a man for you. He would suit you well, but he is only in his second year."

"Who is he?"

"A young Irishman, R. M. Dickey."

"He's our man. I know him."

"But he is not ordained."

The Superintendent looked at his friend through half-closed eyes. "We'll ordain him," he said with prompt decision.

The younger man, accustomed as he was to the resourcefulness of his chief, was startled at this calm proposal to assume Assembly powers, and stated his fear that even for the resourceful Superintendent this might prove impossible. But not at all. The Superintendent had in his mind an ancient regulation permitting the ordination for special service, of students who had completed their second year. The interview closed with a line of action clearly determined. Mr. Gordon was to see Mr. Dickey, who was a member of his congregation, and prepare him for the formal call of the Superintendent. The story of the result of this call is told by Mr. Dickey himself:

"No man who ever met him escaped altogether the spell of his personality. I experienced it perhaps more than some others, in 1897. Probably you will remember that at the close of the summer you told me that Dr. Robertson and you had decided to ask me to go to the Yukon for two years. I was so much astonished that I remained silent. The disappointment at home where I was expected soon, the interruption in my study and, I suppose, the unknown perils and hardships of such a journey, as well as the responsibility of so many souls, weighed upon me overwhelmingly. Seeing this, you asked me to go back to the college, think and pray over it, and come to no decision till after Convocation. In the meantime, my friends and the professors advised against it. I went to Convocation without having seen my duty. It was all like a dream to me, till Dr. Robertson rose to speak. He spoke, as he always did, from a soul on fire. After a few introductory sentences, he told us of his visit to the Coast and what he had seen there—the steamers leaving the piers, all crowded with eager gold-seekers bound for the Yukon. Then folding his arms and closing his eyes in his characteristic manner, he said:

"'These men have souls. Some of them will make fortunes and be tempted to destruction; some will be disappointed in their search; all will endure hardships, and many of them will die; many will be broken down. We must send with them some one to tell them of the treasure more precious than gold, some one to warn them in their day of prosperity, or remind them in their day of calamity, that God reigneth, some one to stand by the dying bed and point men to Christ. These men who are facing a thousand perils have grit, courage, endurance; we must send a man to turn the faces of these strong men heavenward.'

"Later on he added, 'God has given us an opportunity which we dare not neglect. We have asked a student of this college to go to the Yukon, and I believe he will hear in our request the call of God.'

"You will understand how such an address appealed to my heart as no other ever did, and I hesitated no longer. And I think that was a fair example of the way he managed to get men for the difficult outposts."

To Mr. Dickey that Convocation speech was memorable indeed. It largely determined for him the whole course of his future life. He had already planned to visit his home and his mother in Ireland, in the spring after graduation. He had still a year of study before him, but to him the call sounded clear and plain, and having heard, in spite of the opposition of friends and in spite of the remonstrance of professors unwilling to see him break his course, he accepted, and at once began his preparations for what was in that day regarded as an enterprise involving very considerable hardship and no small danger.

He was designated to his mission-field in a solemn service held in St. Stephen's Church, in which Professor Hart, Professor Baird, Sir Thomas Taylor, and his own minister, Rev. C. W. Gordon, took part. And early in October he left for the port of Skagway, pausing in Vancouver long enough to be ordained.

The Assembly's Home Mission Committee, meeting in October, swept off its feet by the enthusiastic report from the Superintendent in regard to the great rush of miners and gold-seekers to the Klondike, and the appointment of the Rev. R. M. Dickey as first missionary, approved of the action of the Superintendent and instructed the Convener to "issue a check for Mr. Dickey's travelling expenses and salary to date."

In the midst of this adventure there came news that smote the heart of the Church with a sudden foreboding, which is contained in the following brief note to Mr. Gordon:

"I am still not well. I am afraid that something serious is the matter. I was consulting Dr. Gilbert Gordon this afternoon, and am to see him again in the morning.''

After a few weeks' rest and treatment he is on his feet again and in the full pressure of the work he cannot and will not lay down. In addition to his ordinary Home Mission duties, the Yukon claims his full and enthusiastic attention. He is eager to secure additional missionaries for the Northern field. The trail has been broken, the lines of communication are established, and men must be found to follow.

Not in the history of our Canadian missions is there clearer evidence of a Committee being guided in its choice of men, than in the case of the Klondike. The next man appointed is the Rev. A. S. Grant, a man fitted in a very special way for work among the Klondike miners, strong, fearless, sympathetic, with experience of Western missions and with two years' medical training. The people of the Edmonton district tell this story of him.

An Indian woman in his field lay dying with a broken leg that had begun to mortify from neglect. There was no doctor to be had. Grant was on the spot with his case of lancets, forceps, etc. The woman must lose her life or lose her leg. Grant decided it should be the latter. With a settler to assist him, he shut the woman's relatives out of the cabin, got an old buck-saw which he rendered antiseptic with boiling water, gave the woman chloroform, sawed off the leg, tied up the arteries, sewed down the flap, her relatives raging at the door outside all the while. He had the satisfaction of seeing her stump round afterwards on a wooden leg which he either made or purchased for her.

Having secured Grant, the Superintendent looks around for a third. He has his eye upon a man of whom he writes in this way :

"*Toronto, Nov. 29, 1897.*

"DEAR GORDON:

"Yours of the 17th I have replied to in part. The Rev. A. S. Grant, as I informed you, is appointed and leaves here about Christmas, and as soon as the West is ready for him I have another man who is ready to pull up stakes and go—a powerful man, sound in wind and limb, strong of joints, level of head and deft of brain, and I am assured courageous withal. The Principal and Professor Hart can rest assured that although not in Winnipeg, I am not forgetful of the needs of the West. My man is Crawford Tate. Keep quiet just now. He is spiritually minded—very necessary.

"Yours in haste,

"J. ROBERTSON."

That last phrase is a window through which we may see the Superintendent's innermost heart. No man ever hated cant with a more violent hatred than did he, but no man ever knew how vitally important it was to success in mission work on the frontier, that a man should be spiritually minded. Something went wrong with this appointment, and Mr. Crawford Tate was denied the privilege of joining the Klondike force.

The designation service of the Rev. A. S. Grant offered an opportunity unique in the Home Mission department of the Church's work, and the Committee decided to make the most of it. The service is thus referred to in the following letter written from Toronto, December 31, 1897:

"DEAR MR. GORDON:

"The meeting designating the Rev. A. S. Grant, took place last evening in St. James' Square Church, and there was a good audience. Sir Oliver Mowat was in the chair, and Principal Grant, A. S. Grant, Drs. Warden and Cochrane and your humble servant were the speakers. At the close, two men told me they would give $100 each for Home Missions, and more, I trust, will follow. Grant leaves here Monday by the Canadian Pacific Railway and will reach Winnipeg Wednesday; I do not know that he will stay off at Winnipeg at all, so you had better arrange to see him at the station." There is no doubt that the mission is appealing to the imagination of the Church. The Superintendent is greatly encouraged. "If $8,000 or $10,000 more are needed," he continues, "for the work in the Klondike, I think it can be got, for prompt action and the character of our men are commanding attention throughout the Church. Even the dailies in Toronto are catching the enthusiasm. I am urging the appointment of more men, and without delay. I am writing Cochrane to come down some day soon so that we may outline our policy, select our men, and take action intelligently. He speaks of delay, but I am to be always opposed to a 'to-morrow' policy."

True enough. And never more opposed than in this present situation of rush and stress. The crowding gold-seekers struggling up the gulches will not wait till to-morrow. The Bread of Life they must have to-day or perish. And so, "Glenora must be provided for at once, and Fort Wrangel sooner! And Teslin Lake demands attention immediately, too. The Stickine route is evidently favoured by the Canadian Pacific Railway people, and since it admits of our reaching Canadian territory speedily, it is to be much preferred. The other route, however, we must provide for, especially on our own side of the line, for both routes are likely to be fully taxed. But men are an important element. If Herdman could be secured for a place like Glenora, it would be well. He knows frontier life and has a good way with men." That he has, as all Calgary Presbyterians and all his fellow labourers in the Presbytery will strongly testify. But Herdman cannot be spared from his present strategic position.

With the intense and concentrated energy of his being, the Superintendent is throwing himself into the administration and development of the Yukon Mission. This makes no small addition to the burden of work he is already bearing, but he has never shirked during his whole career, and though fighting silently and secretly a deadly disease, he will not shirk now. It is perfectly amazing with what rapidity and thoroughness he masters the geographical and other details of the Yukon mission field. In a letter to Mr. Gordon, through whom Mr. Dickey has carried on correspondence with the Superintendent, he indicates a plan of operations in modification of one suggested by Mr. Dickey, which the Superintendent considers too large, too heroic and too costly.

"The whole situation disclosed by Dickey's letter we must consider seriously. I am not sure, however, as to the wisdom of incurring the whole expense and hardship his plan would involve. The C. P. R. people say that when steamer communication from Teslin Lake is established, the trip from Victoria to Dawson can be made in twelve days' actual travelling. Moreover, they say that the Stickine River is open about May 1st, and continues open to October 31st, and Teslin Lake from May 15th to November 15th. Let us say this is the case. There is a steamer on Teslin Lake now, and others will likely be built at once, certainly they will be built if the C. P. R. people are to make this their route. In any case, since the distance between the head of Teslin Lake and Fort Selkirk is only 400 miles, and only one rapid, and that not a difficult one to navigate, and since there is plenty of timber to make boats at Teslin Lake, and men are likely to use it in making boats for themselves, even if steamer accommodation is limited, it seems to me that our men could get down for a reasonable figure and reach there as soon as miners are likely to do. Let our men for the interior leave Vancouver May 1st, it would seem that by June 1st or 10th at most, they could reach Fort Selkirk, or even Dawson. The C. P. R. people will carry men first class, meals and berth included, from Vancouver to Glenora for forty dollars. If we had men stationed at Glenora and Teslin, they could arrange to have our men go in from Glenora to Teslin, or from Teslin to Hootalinqua and on to Fort Selkirk at a small cost compared with Dickey's figures. My view is, but of course I am only considering the case without all the data, that our best plan is to provide for Fort Wrangel, Glenora, and Teslin Lake at once, and any points on the other route that are likely to assume importance such as Bennett, Tagish, and other points farther down, and then wait for the opening of navigation. Grant and Dickey may be able to consult and throw light on the situation; my only concern is to combine, as far as practicable, economy with an enlightened, progressive policy."

To hear him describe to his Committee the physical features, relative positions of camps, the richness of the various placer beds, one would think he had travelled over the ground and had taken copious notes upon the spot. His Committee are nervous about his ambitious plans for expansion, and fear that he has forgotten the painful struggle of years past to make ends meet. But ambitious as is his plan and eager as is his spirit, he is, or at least thinks he is, on his guard against recklessness.

"There will be no disposition," he writes, "having put our hand to the plough, to look back; but we want the Church to understand that there is no recklessness in the methods employed."

The Yukon is booming; the crowds of gold-seekers are growing in volume week by week; the terrors of the sun-less winter are added to those of the deadly trail over the White Pass, but still the crowds pour in. The Home Mission Committee would fain call a halt, but the Superintendent is able to persuade them that on purely financial considerations the Klondike Mission must not be allowed to lag. In a letter to Mr. Gordon he writes as follows :

"The Klondike situation I have no desire to boom, nor will anything we do for it diminish contributions for other work. When the Governor-General, Sir Oliver Mowat, Principal Grant, Dr. Gordon of Halifax and others endorse your course, and money is being sent voluntarily to support the work—some of it from people outside our Communion—it would seem as if we were on the right track. Besides, unless you have a new 'battle-cry' now and then, something to catch the ear and appeal to the imagination, you will lose your influence with the mass, and fail in getting their help. 'Manitoba and the great Northwest' has lost its novelty and potency ; you can no longer charm with it nor fill your coffers."

The Home Mission Fund is filling up. Voluntary subscriptions are beginning to come in, but still the Committee is burdened with a sense of responsibility for the wise expenditure of Church funds. And they are becoming more and more alarmed at this dashing policy of their Superintendent.

"We shall let the American Church," he writes, "care for her own towns, although in the interests of our work and men, it may be necessary to plant men at Fort Wrangel and Skagway (American). I am willing, however, to be guided by those on the ground, about that part of our policy." And here the Canadian empire-builder speaks.

"For patriotic as well as religious reasons I am anxious that the sentiment in the Klondike country should be strongly Canadian. We must take possession as if we wished to hold the ground, and give no occasion for a foreign Church to come in and, with so strong an American element, tamper with the loyalty of our people. This 'Hinterland' of ours is peculiarly surrounded, owing to the ignorance of British diplomatists; and Canada—Church and State—should take care not to leave room for more complications. And a large amount of Christian work is to be done if present expectations are half realized."

The mingled plea of patriotism, good business and religious responsibility evidently prevails with the wary Secretary and cautious Convener, for in a short time he is able to write thus triumphantly:—

"*62 Admiral Road, Toronto, Jan. 6, 1898.*

"DEAR MR. GORDON:—

"Yours has only to-day been received, although dated December 31st.

"We are thinking of making a special appeal to the rich men of the Church for $10,000 for the Klondike. As far as I can see, ten men—eight in addition to those we have—are needed. Fort Wrangel, Glenora, Teslin Lake, Skagway, Lake Bennett, Lake Tagish, Hootalinqua River, Stewart River, Fort Selkirk, and Dawson all need men, and the upper reaches of the streams where mining is going on will see villages and towns springing up for which we must provide. The C. P. R. will evidently give the preference to the Fort Wrangel route, and we should act accordingly. The Dalton route may also require attention. I do not know what to say of the Prince Albert and Edmonton trails, but evidently an effort is to be made to open up communication from the east of the Rockies. Dr. Cochrane seems hard to move. He is too timid about a deficit, and hence there is danger of our losing the prestige we have gained by former action.

"Yours sincerely,
"J. ROBERTSON."

"Eight men and $10,000!" No wonder the Convener feels that with this engine of concentrated energy hitched to the Home Mission train, he must sit with his hand upon the brake. He has not had large experience of deficits for nothing. At the close of that letter the Superintendent pauses to put in this postscript:

"Like you, I feel grateful for all the past year brought, and only regret that more was not done. What a blessing that God is merciful and forgiving."

How this shames us and humbles us who have so much more need to be forgiven!

The tide of interest, however, in the Yukon Mission is steadily rising in the country and in the Church. Canada is sending in the best and bravest of her sons to join the gold-seekers there. Money is pouring in to support the mission and men are offering, and the Superintendent has the altogether new and delightful experience of being able to pick and choose his workers. One can imagine the almost wicked delight he finds in this situation.

"*62 Admiral Road, Toronto, Jan. 31, 1898.*

"DEAR MR. GORDON:—

"I am going off to Ottawa in a very short time and am just writing you a note.

"I wished to have a meeting of the Executive of the Home Mission Committee here this afternoon, but Cochrane could not come. I am getting impatient at this dilly-dally; it seems to me to argue a lack of grasp of the conditions obtaining, but I can do nothing till the authorities move." Whence this sudden reverence for authority? What has come to pass that he waits for any of them? Is there a suspicion of a rising impatience on the part of his Committee unwilling to be hustled along at this breathless and unseemly pace? "I want Glenora and Teslin occupied at once, and sooner if possible—if that is not a bull. Some men offer and others are to be pushed on us, I understand. To all so far I have said no, and colleges may do as they please, but we are to resist men who are not equal to the situation. I hope to have two or three names to submit when the Executive meets here Friday."

The hunter is being hunted now. The appeal of real danger and hardship has touched the heart of the noblest, and the opportunity to win fame has stirred the other kind of men and the colleges to apply. But now, for the first time in his history, he will enjoy the luxury of picking his men.

It is hardly to be expected that the eager pushing of the Klondike Mission upon the attention of Canada and especially of the Presbyterian Church, should go without challenge and criticism. He has already been violently attacked by the Rossland *Miner*, to which he addresses a vigorous reply. From another quarter there comes somewhat veiled criticism that disturbs him not a little. He thus refers to it in a letter to Mr. Gordon:

"From all I can learn, we have the cordial approval of the Church so far, only that the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, who, by their action in the matter of the extra-mural legislation, would seem to censure us for sending Dickey before he had completed his course. I only wish all the men who complete their course would show that they had that stuff in them that he evidently possesses."

The overture in question originated with the Presbytery of Winnipeg, in which the College professors have a preponderating influence, and was, doubtless, inspired by a desire to protect the College from further violence by this filibustering Superintendent. For unless something is done, no man can tell to what lengths he may proceed in his raid for Yukon missionaries. The overture is transmitted to Synod, and through Synod to Assembly, without injury to any one.

But more serious, in that it affected the opinion of the Secretary of the Committee, was the following criticism from a leading minister of Winnipeg, namely, "Winnipeg is not in favour of the Klondike Mission."

"What does this mean?" indignantly writes the Superintendent. "Surely you do not mean that we are to leave that district uncared for? One town or city or Synod should guard against belittling or opposing what another city or Synod regards as important, and is pushing. Winnipeg will gain nothing by opposing the work in the Klondike; the Home Mission Fund will be helped by our action, for we shall get what we require for the Klondike specially, and more for the Home Mission Fund than if the Klondike matter was not taken up. You up there have but a faint idea of the hold the Klondike has taken of the people here. From Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, everywhere people are going off; and we must prepare to provide for them at places where they are sure to congregate in the largest numbers."

But he is not to be deterred. The following week he writes in this fashion:

"We are going to send forward more men to the Klondike at once. I am in correspondence with several, by the authority of the Executive. We must not falter now. Glenora and Teslin we must occupy at once. I heard from Grant; he was in good spirits."

But the trouble is not over, as is apparent from the following letter, dated Toronto, Feb. 24, 1898:

"DEAR GORDON:—

"As you know, Dr. Blank was here, and discussing the Klondike with Dr. Warden, and Dr. Warden was telling me of the 'opposition' in Winnipeg, and asking for an explanation. I told him of the attitude of the *Free Press* last autumn, and attributed it to the fear that some young men might catch the fever and leave their farms, and that thus the population of Manitoba might suffer. This, in my opinion, is folly, for Manitoba stands to gain a good deal by this advertisement, and our prints are on the wrong track to decry the Klondike. Dr. Blank quoted a Winnipeg layman as scouting the idea of a Klondike Fund, or Churches sending missionaries there. Dr. Warden was affected by all this. I told him that when the Rebellion took place Gordon, Pitblado, Barclay, Mackenzie and others were sent out as chaplains, and surely when ten or twenty times as many miners were going, we should provide for them; that British Churches provided for people who went to watering-places in summer, and that digging-places where people were likely to be summer and winter should not be neglected."

Criticism and opposition, however, do not check his pace, nor do they chill the ardour of his triumphant enthusiasm. He has got another man worthy to stand in the front rank with his Klondike heroes. From the time he had first seen him as a student, he had kept his eye upon him, and now at this crisis he sent for John Pringle. On the 23d of February, 1898, he writes thus joyfully:

"DEAR GORDON: —

"Pringle writes that he is leaving St. Paul for Winnipeg on the 4th March. He will be with you over Sunday; arrange for your meeting for Monday, so that there may be as little delay as possible. Should Presbytery meet at the time, it would be, perhaps, as well to have Presbytery take charge, although you might feel freer with the Home Mission Committee. Do what you and the brethren think best. I hope to be with you by Saturday the 5th. I am writing Pringle and telling about suggestions and asking him to communicate with you. I have just received a letter from Pringle.

"In haste,

"J. Robertson."

In another letter he writes:

"Pringle seems to be prepared to go at once, and we are anxious he should do so, because Dickey may go away any time. Klondike Fund—J. A. Macdonald's—is doing well; $128 to-day and we are hopeful. It is thought better not to appoint more men till the Committee meets on the 22d, but letters received will determine our action.

"In great haste,

"J. Robertson."

Yes, "in haste," "in great haste," always so in these days.

On the 20th of April, 1898, a fourth missionary was designated to the Klondike Mission—Rev. J. A. Sinclair, of Spencerville, Ontario, a man worthy in every way to take his place with those who were already in the Yukon. Mr. Sinclair reached Skagway the latter part of May, and there took up the work begun by Mr. Dickey, who had gone on to Bennett.

In the March meeting of the Committee, the effect of the letter and the visit from Winnipeg is plainly seen. Doubt is expressed as to the wisdom of an aggressive campaign in the Yukon. The Superintendent, on the contrary, is consumed with the desire to have a "full dress" discussion in regard to a Yukon policy. But nothing is done. This means disappointment, keen disappointment, not only to the Superintendent, but also to all those in the Committee and throughout the Church who had been following with interest the progress of this mission. This feeling finds expression in an editorial in

The Westminster paper of date April 2, 1898, in which the Committee is severely criticised as follows:

"These are crisis-times in Canada. Not since Confederation, indeed, never in our history, has a year been so crammed with opportunity and risk. . . . But the crisis-time of the nation is the crisis-time of the Church. . . . Is there in the councils of the Church the statesmanship needed in this new time? the wide-visioned, large-minded, risk-meeting statesmanship equal to the sudden demands made by Northern Ontario, the Northwest, British Columbia, and the Klondike? Is the Church's leadership strong, steady, statesmanlike? . . . For answer to these questions the Presbyterian Church turns to the Committee to whom was given the solemn charge of that vast territory stretching from Gaspe to Klondike. . . . It is the business of the Home Mission Committee to lead the Church out into new fields, and take possession in the name of Christ and His Kingdom. . . . This Committee, with imperial interests pressing for a hearing, met on Tuesday forenoon and adjourned on Wednesday afternoon. The work attempted was the passing of grants, revising of lists, and making of appointments. At noon on Wednesday the list of appointments was complete, and adjournment was decided on without one hour's discussion of a policy, without even a hint of a policy being needed. . . . All this is extremely discouraging. We had thought that there was something in the Klondike work. The country thinks so. The Church thinks so. . . . If the Home Mission Committee were to read the letters which every mail brings to this office, it would have planned, not for three men for the Yukon, or four or five, but for at least twenty missionaries and a Presbytery. Had the Committee said to the Church: Give us $20,000 for work in the Klondike, the money would have been on hand as soon as the men were ready. Gentlemen of the Home Mission Committee, the Presbyterian Church in Canada is able and willing and ready, waiting only for the policy you did not adopt, the call you did not issue, the leadership you have not shown."

Of course, there was wrath among the conservatives of the Committee. The Superintendent was charged, and wrongly, with inspiring the article. The Convener and Secretary were deeply grieved, considering that they were specially criticised, though, as is often the case, it was the system rather than the men that was attacked.

It cannot be denied that *The Westminster* article, while not inspired by the Superintendent, gave him very considerable satisfaction. This is evident from the following letter:

" *Toronto, March 31, 1898.*

" DEAR GORDON:

" Macdonald called here last evening to show me your letter—which was in his other coat pocket and which I could not, consequently, see—and his Home Mission article. 'The fat is in the fire' but the blaze will help some people to see the density of the darkness in which the Committee is dwelling. The article is courageous, cannot be passed by, and will mightily help us in the West. Last Wednesday I had a card from Cochrane saying that since Sinclair was now appointed we could rest for a time. I wrote him a stiff letter at once, pointing out to him that Skagway, Lake Bennett, Glenora, Teslin, Leberge, Fort Selkirk, and Dawson needed to be occupied immediately, not to refer to the Big Salmon, the Little Salmon, the Stewart or the upper reaches of the Klondike at all, that unless men started soon, they could not get in till late, that they could not visit or explore during the open season, nor get familiar with the country, and that the long and severe winter would lock them as fast as the rivers. I also pointed out that organization was absolutely necessary and that there must be enough men in the northern part of the territory to meet and deliberate and post the Church as to what is needed. I have had no reply.

" In haste,
" J. ROBERTSON."

War is brewing, and the Superintendent is not the man to decline battle; rather does he rejoice in the prospect. This warlike spirit breathes in the following letter written from Brockville, April 11, 1898:

"DEAR MR. GORDON:

"*The Westminster* article is strongly resented by Dr. Cochrane, who is to say nothing now, but to reply at the Assembly. Dr. Warden does not like the article, as he supposes it reflects on him, too, and he tells me that several have written him saying that they disapprove of it entirely. Some have written me, again, approving of it, and saying that the article was called for. Dr. Cochrane accused me of inspiring it, and based his accusation on the correspondence between certain phrases in letters of mine addressed to him, and certain phrases in *The Westminster* article. I told him that I did not inspire the article, that the style was not mine, that the editor had abundant opportunity of judging for himself, and that it was for us to consider, not who inspired, wrote or published the article, but how much truth it set forth. Dr. Warden does not see that the Committee has failed to do anything it ought to have done during the past year, and points to all that has been done in the West as an evidence of the Committee's enlightened statesmanship! Now there you are—prepare your indictment, marshall your arguments and let the Assembly judge."

But the war-clouds blew over. Those men were too big, too closely bound by ties of mutual affection and esteem, and too deeply interested in the work of the Church to allow their differences in opinion to threaten in the slightest degree the interests of the work to which they were giving their lives. An understanding was arrived at in regard to the Yukon policy, and the Assembly, which had been expecting war, was glad to pass instead a resolution eulogistic of the Yukon Mission and its vigorous prosecution.

The only legislative result of the disturbance was an overture from the British Columbia Synod asking for a reorganization of the Home Mission Committee and a change in its methods of administration, which overture, being duly presented, went the way of its kind, being referred to a Committee and then buried, but achieving results before its demise. The Church was fully roused. The Hôme Mission Committee adopted a vigorous policy and, being assured that the Church was behind the movement, warmly and even enthusiastically prosecuted its mission in the far north, to the great joy of all concerned.

It is pleasant to think that this slight flurry of a difference in opinion between these great leaders, passed so quickly away, and all the more that before the year was out Dr. Cochrane, the Convener of the Home Mission Committee for twenty-six years, in the very midst of his service and in the full tide of his strength, was called away. He was greatly missed and greatly mourned by all his associates in the cause of Home Missions, and by none more than by Dr. Robertson, the Superintendent, and Dr. Warden, the Secretary, with both of whom his fellowship had been so close for a quarter of a century.

In 1900, in response to an urgent request from Mr. Pringle, two nurses, Miss Mitchell and Miss Bone, were sent into the Yukon.

The excitement in connection with the gold-digging in the Klondike gradually subsided and the mining of gold settled down into a legitimate industry from which the Dominion has continued to reap large revenue year by year.

Early in March the whole Church, but especially the

Church in the West, suffered a heavy loss in the death of the Rev. Dr. King, Principal of Manitoba College. His removal was a severe blow to the College and to its important work, but it was a severe blow to the cause of Home Missions as well, for there was no man in all the West who stood closer to the Superintendent and more warmly supported him, than did Principal King; and to no man in all the Church was the Superintendent bound by stronger ties of friendship. And because the Superintendent well knew how keen would be the grief in the heart of every student of the College, he took care to write at once to Mr. Dickey in the Klondike, conveying to him the sad news.

"You will be sorry to learn," he writes, "that Dr. King is no more. Last evening I received a telegram here from Winnipeg, informing me that yesterday he had passed away quietly. His death is a distinct loss to the College, the Church, and the country. Time and opportunity were given him to do service; he availed himself of both, and he has reared for himself an enduring monument."

Throughout the whole period of their association in Western work, these two leaders, each supreme in his own department, wrought together in undisturbed mutual confidence and affection. And none knew better than Dr. Robertson how to appreciate the simple sincerity and the superb self-devotion of Principal King.

In the spring of the same year it was reported that Mr. Dickey's health showed signs of breaking down. The Superintendent thus writes to him:

"As to your coming out, we shall be glad to welcome you to civilization again, but had your health permitted, I would have been pleased to have had you remain till the autumn of 1900."

But this was not possible. The evil effect of toil, exposure, insufficient and improper food was so serious that it was decided that Mr. Dickey must return. None knew better than the Superintendent what he had borne, and none could sympathize with him more truly. Under date July 12, 1899, he wrote this truly beautiful letter :

"Dear Mr. Dickey :—

"I was very sorry to learn that spring did not restore your health and that you were compelled to come out. We shall all do what we can for you on your return, and hope that a change of scene and diet, rest and medical treatment, may restore you completely to health. I know a little of what working while unwell means, and I most sincerely sympathize with you.

"As to your work and service, let me say that the Church feels proud of the staff she has in the far north, and that no one holds a higher place than the pioneer. Your good sense, your intrepidity, your broad catholic spirit, and the service rendered to men as men and Christians, all this has taken hold of the heart of the Church ; and when you come out and appear on platforms and are lionized, I hope your head will not be turned, but that you may remain the modest and manly Dickey we all knew and loved, and I believe you will. Nor is the Church the only body that has learned of your work and heroic spirit ; the public press has done much to familiarize the names of all of you. You will find it hard to live up afterwards to all that has been written in your praise. But we deeply sympathize with you in your travels and exposure, with hard roads and hard fare ; but if some souls have been saved, some strengthened to resist temptation, some cheered, some brought out of gloom and darkness, some inspired to hold fast, surely there is some reward—'Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it to Me.'"

That letter Mr. Dickey will always cherish among his household gods.

In the autumn of the same year Mr. Grant returns. The following resolution of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, prepared and moved by Dr. Robertson, seconded by Dr. Armstrong, sets forth the high appreciation of their missionary's work and their warm welcome to him on his return:

"That in welcoming Mr. Grant on his return from the Yukon, the Committee desires to assure him of their high appreciation of the valuable service rendered by him in that new and difficult mission. To say of any man that he found a mass of people and organized them into a congregation; that in a year's time he brought it up to the point of self-support; that he succeeded in getting a church built for the homeless congregation, and paid for, at a cost of $8,000; that he acted as leader in building such an hospital as the Good Samaritan Hospital at Dawson, and from its inception till the day of his departure from Dawson, acted as its medical superintendent, is to bestow high praise. These things Mr. Grant did, and they will remain a monument to his loyalty to the Church, his efficiency as a missionary, his power over men, the largeness of his sympathies and his willingness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ to endure hardness."

In the following spring it was found necessary on the ground of broken health to recall Mr. Pringle, and this is done by the following resolution:

"That in view of the privations and hardships experienced during the past two years, the Rev. John Pringle be granted three months' leave of absence, that he be allowed the sum of $225 to cover his travelling expenses, that on his return to the Yukon he be appointed to the new field known as The Creeks (the Committee suggesting to him the advisability of his taking his family to Dawson City), and that all the arrangements in connection with his holiday be left in the hands of the Home Mission Executive."

At that same meeting of the Committee the administration of the Yukon was transferred from the Assembly's Home Mission Committee to the Presbytery of Westminster, with which Presbytery the Yukon has remained associated to this present time.

During its short history the Yukon has suffered much at the hands of lawless and wicked men and women, but those who know it best join in testimony that it has been saved from much by the noble character of those who represented the Presbyterian Church in that northland, and by the service they rendered to those to whom it was their privilege to minister. And for the early establishment and the energetic prosecution of that mission, the Church has cause to be grateful to the faith, the courage, the energy of the Superintendent who selected and hurried forward these heroic missionaries to that remote and perilous field.

XXXIII

THE NIGHT COMETH AND ALSO THE MORNING

THE years of the Yukon campaign were, perhaps, the most intensely active years of the Superintendent's whole life. Into no other five years did he pack so much concentrated effort, and no other years of effort were crowned with such brilliant success. In the light of subsequent events we can now recognize how truly heroic those years were, for during the whole period, silently and without moan, he was fighting and losing his last fight with a deadly disease. It may be that he heard the call that warned him of the coming night, and that he felt the compulsion of the hurrying minutes.

It was to the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories of November, 1897, that Mr. Gordon made the first public announcement of the Superintendent's serious illness, and from that hour those who stood nearest to him in work set themselves to lighten his burden and to save him to the Church, but from that hour till his last, he seemed to press more and more eagerly into the field. From that Synod went this telegram to its old and trusted leader:

"REV. DR. ROBERTSON, Superintendent of Missions,
"*62 Admiral Road, Toronto.*

"The Synod unitedly prays that the God of all comfort may be with you and restore you to us soon."

Afterwards the following resolution of sympathy was likewise sent :

"The Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories learns with deep regret of the serious illness of the Superintendent of Missions, by which he is prevented from attendance at this meeting, expresses its warm sympathy with Dr. Robertson and his family in his affliction, and urges him to take such complete rest from all work as may serve to hasten his recovery.

"The Synod prays, as it has already joined in praying, that Almighty God may comfort and sustain Dr. Robertson in his affliction and bless the means employed for his speedy recovery."

In response there came from him to his brethren the following telegram :

"A grateful heart thanks Synod for message of sympathy. Condition slightly improved. May Synod's deliberations be abundantly blessed.

"J. ROBERTSON,"

and afterwards many warm and grateful letters to his co-labourers in the West. The following letters breathe a spirit of such tender, humble devotion to the Master whom he served and of such grateful affection for his fellow workers, that we may be pardoned for printing them in full. The first is to Mr. Gordon.

"*62 Admiral Road, Toronto, Nov. 15, 1897.*

"DEAR GORDON :—

"Your two letters were duly received and touched me keenly, because I felt how unworthy I was of all that was said and done at the Synod, and is being said now by letter by so many of my brethren. After all the Synod and yourself and others have done, it will be well-nigh impossible for me to go West again. I no longer wonder how demigods and other gods of that ilk were made and worshipped, after all that a grave and Reverend—I was going to write it with a small r but I corrected myself as you, with your young eyes, will see—Synod will do in the case of a very ordinary mortal like myself. We are all a band of brothers working with one Father and Elder Brother to establish truth and righteousness in the West, and should one fall, bury him and let the rest push on the work. But I trust I am not to be taken yet—I want to live a few years longer to see the development that I feel sure is coming one day, and I think is drawing near—and I would like to do a little more to express my love to Him who is all my salvation and my desire. When you look over the past you are struck with the barren waste. What have you done? Whom have you helped? There has been opportunity, but it has not been embraced, souls to cheer, to guide, to comfort, but, alas! it was not done. But regrets are vain and I am not going to indulge in them now. Thanks for all the news about the Synod. I hear that you acquitted yourself well as usual—thank you. And I am glad Dr. King made a financial speech, and since he can be strong and pointed and knows the situation, I hope he did not put on gloves, but struck with bare knuckles. Some men require to be struck a stinging blow in the 'solar plexus,' not he of St. Stephen's.

"There was a Home Mission deficit of over $4,000 last spring, as put in my report or rather yours. See the Home Mission financial statement in Assembly Report.

"By writing letters when not too tired, I am doing something to stir up an interest. Pastors, I find, are reading letters to congregations, and they find their way into the local papers.

"You do not know how you relieve me by your presence and work in Winnipeg. May God reward you—I never can.

"I am holding my own, I think; I cannot say I am gaining yet. Dr. Gilbert Gordon was here Saturday. He seems to be satisfied. All wish to be remembered to you.

"Yours sincerely,
"J. ROBERTSON."

Another of later date is to Mr. McQueen, in whose fellowship and loyal affection he has ever found great joy:

"DEAR MR. MCQUEEN :—

"I hope to be able to be with you at the Presbytery meeting, although I am recovering but slowly. I conducted the anniversary services at Blyth—my late father's congregation—and gave an address Monday evening on Home Missions in the mining districts of British Columbia, and I found that I had by no means recovered my former staying power. However, I am gaining and hope to be with you.

"I have been unwell for more than a year past, but did not know that a dangerous disease had fastened itself upon me. Weight, strength, energy went down, but by force of will I went on doing work. A collapse came, and then the physician told me my danger. He told me the case was not hopeless, but that rest and regimen were absolutely necessary—I am taking them as best I can. But if I had to do nothing I fear I should die. I think there is a slight change for the better, and I hope it may continue. Brethren have been very kind; in fact, it was almost worth while to get sick to know how much good people thought was in you. I do not think my brethren insincere—far from it—but their praise was very embarrassing because you who know yourself much better than they could, detect little of what they appeared to see. Mental illusion or delusion. But their kindness I shall never forget. But I have no idea of giving up yet, and I hope that God who has been gracious and kind, will spare me to go to Edmonton.

"Give my very kind regards to Mrs. McQueen and the rest. And my wife wishes me to thank for her all who show an interest in my recovery. My dear fellow, do what your hand finds to do *now*. Lost opportunities are an awful nightmare on a sick-bed. Life looks so barren of good that you bless God for being merciful.

"J. ROBERTSON."

With these letters should go two others. They are from his wife to Mrs. Hart who, with Professor Hart, had been through all the years a warmly sympathetic and unweariedly helpful friend, and they are a window into that holy place of sacrifice where the Robertson family have made offering year by year upon the altar of service to Church and country, of which sacrifice and altar the wife and mother stands high priestess. The first bears the date November 26, 1897, and is as follows:

"MY DEAR MRS. HART:—

"Your kind words of love and sympathy were very much appreciated by us, and we thank you for them. It is pleasant to know that you all take so much interest in one so near and dear. I trust your prayers on his behalf are being answered, and that in God's good time he may be restored to health. We were thankful that he got home before he was taken ill, and we are glad to have him with us even sick. We need him, and he needs us none the less.

"He is improving, though somewhat slowly, and I hope he may be induced to take sufficient rest now, so that there may be no relapse.

"Though unable to go around to give addresses, he is busy the greater part of the day with work for the Church—writing, writing—too much, I think, but it is difficult to restrain him, and he would be thinking of it anyway, which would be nearly as bad.

"You Western people seem to think you own the Doctor. All the cry is, 'Get better and come back to *us*.' What about wife and family? I am rather jealous for my rights. But really the people have all been extremely kind. Thank you once more.

"Give our kindest regards to Professor Hart and the young people. Remember me to Miss Lawson. Love to your dear self.

"Your sincere friend,
"M. A. ROBERTSON."

"Jealous!" alas, poor wife, she has him for a while to herself, and what wonder that she stands almost fiercely on guard.

To Mrs. Hart's answer there comes this reply which, more than any quoted in these pages, penetrates the heart with its poignant pathos. It is as follows:

"*62 Admiral Road, Toronto, Dec. 18, 1897.*

"MY DEAR MRS. HART:—

"Judging from the number of letters that go to Winnipeg from 62 Admiral Road, I presume you are in possession of all the information I can give you. However, I want to write to let you know how welcome your letter was with its news and with its comfort, and how much I appreciate your interest in us.

"The Doctor still continues to improve. He is stronger, his colour better, his skin softer and more moist, the pains or cramps in his limbs pretty much gone, and he feels better. He can walk for an hour or even two each day, without being very much fatigued, but he still keeps very thin, one might say almost skin and bone. We get the best of everything he is allowed to eat, and I do all the preparing and serving myself. He has a good appetite, too (I am told that is a characteristic of the disease), and relishes four meals each day, except occasionally when confined to bed.

"Maybe you saw from the papers that he attended the Toronto Presbytery and gave an address. This evening he went to Hamilton to address Dr. Lyle's congregation tomorrow.

"He is very anxious to get better and to work, and I am sure the prayers and expressions of love and sympathy from his many friends have comforted and cheered him. To all of those we owe a debt of gratitude, and especially to those in the West, whose kindness we can never forget.

"Probably you were right when you said I would not like it any better were you to say, 'Get better and stay in Toronto.' I do not think he would be any better away from home. He certainly would take work or make it, and he could not have the care and attention he receives here.

"It will be quite a treat to have him with us during the Xmas season. Never *once* since 1881 has he been at home for the holiday season.

"Love from all of us to you and yours. May your Xmas be a happy and joyous one.

"Your loving friend,
"M. A. ROBERTSON."

Home "*once*" only in sixteen years for the Christmas season and that by reason of sickness.

Soon he is better and out again upon the field. Indeed, his eager spirit has never for a moment been absent from its activities, and with such dash and vigour does he lead, that he deceives his friends and perhaps himself as to his true condition.

At its March meeting in 1898, the Home Mission Committee seeks to relieve him of the more laborious features of his work, and appoints him Field Secretary, hoping that he may give to others those long, wearisome journeys through the wide extent of his Western field. But it is quite useless. Field Secretary he may be, but that will not withdraw him from the field. Nay, if he be *Field* Secretary, surely the field must claim him more and more. So in September of that year we find him more in the thick of the work than ever. The two following letters give us the programme for two of his journeys:

"*Gainsboro, Assa., Sept. 1, 1898.*

"DEAR MRS. HART :—

"The programme has been so far carried out to the letter. The day I left you I got to Napinka and held a meeting in the evening; Thursday I got to Oxbow and went south seventeen miles to a meeting, returning the same night; Friday I spent corresponding, and addressed a meeting in the evening; Saturday drove forty-seven miles with a lame 'plug' that made me weary to finish the journey; Sabbath, three services and a drive of forty-three miles—Moose Mountain field; Monday, a drive of forty-three miles, a runaway, a broken pole, but 'nobody hurt,' and a successful meeting; Tuesday, meeting at Carievale, well attended, and a drive to Gainsboro afterwards, nine or ten miles; Wednesday, correspondence, drive south to Winland, meeting and return here; to-day going to Estevan. Strength remaining, but diet not quite the right kind. Country people are very kind, but limited as to range in furnishing meals. White bread, canned fruit, and jams are always in evidence, while eggs, etc., have to be asked for. They are tired of them themselves, and think others are too. But I am doing very well.

"Missions I find in a state requiring attention. I am getting them to pull up—in some cases, to nearly double former contributions.

"Mrs. R—— and the rest were well, as I learned two days ago.

"With grateful remembrances of all your kindness, and asking to be remembered to Professor Hart, Miss Ethel and Mr. William,

"With great respect,
"Yours sincerely,
"J. ROBERTSON."

"*Revelstoke, B. C., Sept. 12, 1898.*

"DEAR MRS. HART:—

"So far I have got on my journey filling all appointments, and although I am not quite fresh, yet I am holding out fairly well. I attended the meeting of the Presbytery of Calgary at Medicine Hat on Tuesday last, and posted off that night to Calgary, and reached Edmonton on Wednesday evening, and gave an address at a public meeting. Thursday attended Presbytery meeting, and we finished business Friday, visited, and conducted service in the evening, baptizing six children, the minister's infant daughter being one. Saturday returned to Calgary, and conducted two services Sabbath, and got here this evening. To-morrow morning I am going away to a meeting of the Presbytery of Kamloops at Nelson, and returning to go to Vancouver. The first basket I got safely, and saw the second at Calgary when going to Edmonton, but could not get it this morning—the agent was absent. I am getting it sent here, so that on my return from Nelson I may get it. I am very much obliged to you, but I am ashamed to put you to so much trouble. I received considerable help from the gluten bread.

"I have heard from home, and all are well. Mr. Gordon I hope to meet in the Kootenay on Wednesday.

"Kind regards to Professor Hart, Miss Ethel, Mr. William and your 'Scorrish' cousin. With best thanks and warmest esteem,

"Believe me to be, dear Mrs. Hart,
"Yours sincerely,
"J. ROBERTSON."

The anniversary of his wife's birthday and of their marriage, the 23d of September, finds husband pushing along the dusty mountain trails, and wife waiting at home in anxiety and fear for tidings. He cannot be with her to celebrate; a telegram and letter must do. These anniversary letters are too sacred for any printed page, but from this one we may select some paragraphs:

"Last night I sent you congratulations for to-day, which is the anniversary of your birth and of our marriage. I would have liked very much to have been able to be with you, but it seems always difficult of being realized, owing to my engagements.

"On my arrival here I got your letter, and after reading it I felt doubly sorry to be away. I suppose you did your best with the children. I spent last night without sleep on the train, and to-day in a heated atmosphere till 4 P. M. It was not like the anniversary of our wedding, but it could not be helped.

"I am sorry—sorrier than you, I think, that we have not been more together, and especially sorry for you. If you have had the pleasure of the children's company you have had all the trouble in connection with them and their upbringing. Of this I would willingly have relieved you in part, but could not. I am thankful to God that you have been able to do it so well. And it will be some satisfaction to you if in the providence of God they turn out well, that you have been able to do so much for them even although the work was hard and the task responsible.

"But as I was thinking of the past, I do not know that you would have been better with any of the other fellows who coveted your hand so much. Poor Adam left life early, Mac has long since gone after him. Matheson and you would not agree, nor would Wilson or Cowing. I cannot really tell how many more you had. It would seem as if S—— was your only hope in the matter of permanent companionship, and him you refused. Had you known, however, that you would be so much of the time separated from me, I suppose you would have had nothing to do with me, and then our dear children would be calling some one else father. As for me, I suppose had I known that my life would have been such as it is, I would not have presumed to ask any person to be my partner, and my past and future would have a different hue. Well, things are as they are, nor am I sorry, but the reverse, except in the matter of such frequent and long separations. My wife promised to be loving and faithful, and she has kept her part of the covenant during these years, and if to-day ended the contract, I would with all my heart ask her to renew it again for life. Were I to say more, you would say I was trying to please you without my heart being in my words, and this has never been the case. My dear wife I loved and love and will while life lasts or reason holds the throne. I know she insists on measuring me by her own bushel, but I think that mine is more just and I must continue to use it. Kiss our dear children. Tell them the story of your courtship, of your beaux and your troubles with them, of your desire to marry two, if not three of them, if not to please yourself, to please them, and the hard luck that gave you their father. You could entertain them for an evening, and I venture to say they would listen."

British Columbia with its mining activity is now the danger zone of the Dominion, hence he must be on the ground, and with his old disregard of personal comfort and of health, he outlines his programme and then proceeds relentlessly to fill it in.

In August, 1899, the Superintendent spent two weeks in the Boundary Country. The story of that campaign is told in a paper by the Rev. H. J. Robertson. So simple, so direct, so vivid is this narrative, and such a picture does it give of heroic endurance on the part of the old chief and of loyal devotion on the part of his young clansman, that it is without apology set down here.

"It was in August, 1899, Dr. Robertson came to Nelson on his way to Rossland, where the new Presbytery of Kootenay was to be organized. He was looking exceedingly well. We went on to Rossland together, and after concluding Presbytery business, Dr. Robertson left for Marcus, Washington State, on Thursday morning, *en route* to Grand Forks. From Marcus his travelling was to be by stage forty-five miles to Grand Forks, twenty miles to Greenwood, twelve miles to Midway and return, with Cascade, Columbia, Phœnix and Eholt to visit by the way. The following Thursday morning I met him at the station in Nelson. He was old and haggard and played out, scarcely able to walk. I took his 'grip' while he, in his fatherly way, took my arm, and as we went up the hill together told me what he had been doing during the past week. It had been long drives by stage, meetings every night, consultations with ministers and missionaries and managers, letter-writing till after midnight, and up at daybreak to catch the early stages. During the week he had averaged about two hours' sleep a night. Little wonder, then, that he was played out.

"He rested that day in Nelson in Mr. Frew's apartments, and while he dictated I wrote many letters for him. Friday morning he was off again by the seven o'clock train for Slocan, where he held a meeting that night. Saturday he visited New Denver, Roseberry, and Three Forks, getting to Sandon that evening. Sunday morning he preached in Sandon, and by the afternoon train went over to Kaslo, where he preached in the evening.

"It was in Sandon, on Friday, that he was taken ill with dysentery, and by Sunday evening was so weak that he was unable to stand during the service, so sat down by the pulpit and addressed the people. Monday evening he was off by the boat for Ainsworth. A meeting had been arranged for at that place and he simply had to keep his engagements, so he said. At Ainsworth he lay down in the missionary's shack during the day—too ill to move out, and in the evening presided at the meeting for which he had come—and again he was too weak to stand. That night I passed up the lake bound for the Lardeau district, which the Superintendent had asked me to explore, and as we saw the lighted church from the boat I wondered how it was going with the old man, but little thought that he was in such dire straits.

"Tuesday night Dr. Robertson was billed for a meeting at Ymir, a little mining town seventeen miles south of Nelson. This was the last engagement in West Kootenay and he was determined to fulfill it. By steamer he came down the lake from Ainsworth to Five Mile Point where he got the morning train south to Ymir."

He was ill, dangerously ill, but getting medicine from the Ymir druggist, he held his meeting. A week later Mr. Robertson heard that the Superintendent was still in Ymir, detained by sickness. At once Robertson set off from Nelson for Ymir, walking the seventeen miles in four hours, over the most difficult trail he had ever travelled.

"On inquiring for Dr. Robertson, I was directed to the home of a man whose name I have forgotten. Here I found the old hero wonderfully well, as I had been imagining all sorts of things on my way over. Before I had time to make any inquiry about himself, he began to ply me with questions.

"'Hello! Where have you come from?'

"'From Nelson.'

"'When?'

"'To-day.'

"'Where have you been since the train came in four hours ago? Where did you get the mud on your boots?'

"'Oh, I got that walking over from Nelson. I missed the train and walked over.'

"'Well, what did you walk over here for? I thought you were up in Lardeau.'

"'I came down last night to Nelson and heard this morning that you were sick, so came over to look after you.' It had never entered the old man's head that any one would walk any distance to see him. When he heard why I had come, he said nothing, but I saw his eyes fill with tears, and I had my reward.

"We went back to Nelson that same afternoon, and from the station, where we found Mr. Creasse waiting with a cab, we drove to Dr. Arthur's, and from there to Mr. James Lawrence, a son of the Rev. James Lawrence, formerly of Stony Mountain. Here Dr. Robertson remained and rested another day, while I was kept busy writing letters, making new engagements for the following weeks.

"A few weeks later, he preached on Sunday morning in St. Stephen's, Winnipeg. At the close of the service he found out Mrs. Murray and told her that he had seen her nephew, Robertson, in British Columbia, and 'he walked seventeen miles to see me when I was sick.'"

God bless the young man! and God give him a great ministry! He served us all that day in serving Him whom we would so gladly serve.

The great expansion in British Columbia and the establishing of the Yukon Mission leave the Committee struggling with a deficit, which deficit sends the Superintendent through Eastern Canada on the hunt for funds till his strength fails. Then the Executive, needing men more sorely than it needs money, hurries the Superintendent off to Scotland to bear greetings to the Union Assembly of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches there, and to win the continued interest of the united Church in Western Canada, and to get men. The Executive is hopeful, too, that with leagues of sea between him and his field, their Field Secretary may, perchance, be manœuvred into rest.

To their mutual delight, his wife accompanies her husband upon this trip. His work the Superintendent apportions to one and another of his colleagues, for he is not the man to leave it uncared for. Hence the following letter to Mr. Gordon:

"*Cunard R. M. S. 'Lucania,' October 25, 1900.*

"DEAR MR. GORDON:—

"When I left Winnipeg a few things that I was to attend to were left unsettled. Mr. McLaren of Vancouver wanted a man for Fairview—a part of Vancouver like Mt. Pleasant—I wanted to see G. C. Grant about going there, but did not have a chance." And so through the whole list of men and fields, each having received his personal care and attention.

"D—— I was trying to get settled at Leduc. He was ready to go, but his wife was afraid of being, like Lot's wife, turned, not into a pillar of salt, but a pillar of ice. But D—— has been tried in a number of places in British Columbia, and does not fit anywhere, and hence I was anxious to try him on the Alberta plains to see how he would do. Will you follow this out, too?

"I told Tina, before I left Toronto, to send you all letters, after consulting Dr. Warden in reference to cases he should consider, and I told Dr. Warden to send you any men he had and that you would place them. The list of vacancies I sent you; for fear it got lost or miscarried, let me repeat. . . .

"I have asked the other Conveners to write you about men.

"I left on my table, when I left home, the material for a Home Mission report to the Synod; Tessie will likely send it to you. You and Mr. Farquharson can arrange its matter, and add to it as you deem best, and present it with my apologies for my absence. The Augmentation report I sent you ere I left.

"The treasurer's report you will also present. Get all moneys due—accounts were sent to everybody in time—and enter them in the book. I told Tessie to send you the book, the receipted bills, and the stubs of checks Mr. Farquharson made out to Conveners attending meetings of Home Mission Committee. These will, I trust, be accepted as vouchers. The checks themselves are in the bank. If anything needs explanation I shall give it on return.

"Best regards,
"J. Robertson."

After two months of visiting training-schools, institutes and colleges, his physician sends him off with his wife to the Hydropathic at Crieff, with strict orders to rest. From this somewhat gay watering-place he writes this delightfully bright and breezy letter to Mrs. Hart on New Year's Day, 1901:

"On this day that ushers in the new year and new century, I feel I must write you, if only a note, to offer you, Professor Hart, Ethel and Willie, the greetings of the season. May heaven's best blessings be bestowed on you all this year, and may the century be called old before you are forced to admit that you feel as if you were beginning to get old.

"Well, we are here by doctor's orders, and trying to get back strength lost. Losing, I find, is easier than gaining. In a sense I am gaining, and yet things are not satisfactory. To-day, Mrs. R—— and I had a good walk—four miles—and at the end of our trip she was more tired than I. And yet, sugar is in my blood, in my feet, in my hands—I feel it, the crystals scratching and irritating, and causing local swellings. But enough of this. Mrs. R—— is well and enjoys her rest.

"I have not been addressing congregations or Presbyteries. I did address the people here on two occasions, and was given two contributions of £300 each, or nearly $3,000 in all. I am willing to hire myself out for the rest of my days, well or ill, at that figure. I am writing leaflets, letters, etc., etc., and trying to awaken an interest in that way; but the people here are self-centred, insular, provincial in their ideas—small to a marvel, considering the talk about Empire and Evangelization, Enlightenment, and all the other E's they are supposed to have and use. And this *Union* has left little time for one section of the Church to do but ask 'Where are we at?' The United Presbyterians seem to be glad, but the Frees look to me as if they thought that they had married just a little below them. But ''tis done, the great transaction's done,' and they must make the best of it. Meetings have been held in all the centres of population, Glasgow, Paisley, Perth, Inverness, Dundee, Aberdeen, etc., to celebrate the event, and all passed off very well. A Free Church fragment—mostly Highlanders—stayed out—a great pity, as they cannot hope to accomplish anything. It will take the congregations all their time to live, and the ministers of some of them will scarcely command milk for their porridge. Time will reveal the failure.

"This Hydro. just now is like a fair. There must be 250 people here. From all parts they come. And such a display of silk and jewellery, of arms and shoulders, I have never seen. But with their style and charms, I think I have seen a girl near Manitoba College somewhere, that I would match against the most captivating and capturing of them all. More than once I wished she was here. To-night we had a splendid spread, haggis brought in with Highland honours, regular big paunches, steaming hot, on four huge trays borne aloft, followed by as many bottles fully displayed. Down one aisle headed by the piper they went, and up the other, guests standing and cheering. Afterwards 'Comietta' in the recreation-room, followed by dancing. We had prayers in the drawing-room at 9:45. I looked in on the others afterwards, waltzing in full swing. Strange mixture of piety and gayety here. I am in the 'writing-room now, all alone—not all alone—couples come in here, and tête-à-têtes are proceeding. I long to tell them I cannot hear well, so that they may have more freedom, but I 'don't like to.' But enough.

"No plans for the future. I am going to address students in Edinburgh next week, and Presbytery of Perth. The following week I may go to Budapest; Mr. Allan is arranging for ticket, passport, etc.

"With kindest regards from both of us to you all. I wish we had a little of your weather. Nothing here but fog, mist, cloud, rain, slop. Fall of soft snow Sunday, but it did not stay."

By the kind thoughtfulness of Mr. R. S. Allan of Glasgow, whose guests they are for a few days, Dr. Robertson and his wife are sent off to Budapest where there is to be a great gathering of students. He has a most cordial reception and secures for Western work two men. His experiences on the continent and his opinions thereupon, are worth recording. We select the following extract from a letter to Dr. Hart:

"Learning that there were colleges at Debritszen and Koloszvar, I arranged to go there, and had enthusiastic meetings, although the students had never heard of Canada, and one of the professors, who interpreted for me, stopped me in my address and asked me whether, when I said Canada was nearly as large as Europe, I did not mean Europe without Russia? When I answered that I meant all west of the Ural Mountains and the Ural River, the students made a sort of noise that I never heard except in Hungary, but which I was told was a cheer. At both places the bishops attended, and showed great interest; and when I called on one of them privately he offered, if we sent two Hungarians home, to educate and board and lodge them for the four years' course in Theology free of cost. This offer he made as Bishop, he said, and the interpreter, Professor Ciszy—pronounced Cheeky—informed me that this was as good as a bond, and binding on his successor.

"Returning to Budapest, we arranged to start for Vienna, where we spent the Sabbath. We attended the Free Church Mission in the forenoon, and I addressed the Reformed Congregation in the evening, and the Y. M. C. A. Monday on mission work in the West. Tuesday we came to Prague, and I instituted inquiries about the Bohemians. I made little of it. There is not much of a Church, and it is morally rotten, not the Church from which to get missionaries. Then we pushed on here, where Mr. Macmillan, brother of Mr. Macmillan of Lindsay, looked up quarters for us. I called on Dr. Merensky, the head of a Foreign Mission College here, and have the prospect of getting some men through him.

"But I have concluded that it is scarcely safe to get many men from Europe. They have the mercenary, far more than the missionary, spirit developed ; spiritual life is not as requisite for spiritual work, nor does a man need to believe what he teaches any more than a lawyer. Worse, they are not clean in the great majority of cases. From ninety to ninety-five per cent. of the theological students even of the Reformed Church are said by ministers to be unclean. Unbelief is spreading rapidly, and the ranks of the 'Social Democrats' being rapidly recruited. Can any good come out of Nazareth? Better try to get or train men amid better surroundings. But enough of this."

From the continent he returns not greatly improved in health, but still hopeful and eager for recruits for Canada. He is home in the spring of 1901 in time for the March meeting of the Committee. By the Committee he is welcomed with grateful affection for his own sake and for the work he has done. He reports that he has secured forty-two men and over $10,000 in cash or in promises, and the Committee, lifted out of the slough of a threatened deficit, faces the General Assembly with the report of such splendid achievement as has never been equalled in the history of the Church. This report is presented by the Superintendent himself with his accustomed freshness and force, and is received by the Assembly with great enthusiasm.

A supplementary report is presented by the Moderator, the Rev. Dr. Warden, Convener of the Home Mission Committee, praying the Assembly to arrange for some adequate assistance to Dr. Robertson in the matter of superintendence. This request, upon motion of the Rev. J. W. Macmillan, seconded by Dr. Bryce, is granted. With simple dignity the Superintendent thanks the Assembly for the kind thoughtfulness in this matter, and the work of superintendence of Western missions enters upon a new phase.

He is often on his feet during this Assembly. Against the advice of many of his friends who know the hopelessness of it, he moves the Home Mission Committee's recommendation requesting the Women's Foreign Mission Society to widen the scope of its activity to embrace Home as well as Foreign Mission work. It is the last of a long series of efforts in this direction, and it fails.

Dr. Robertson has sometimes been criticised as being hostile to Foreign Mission work. None who know his attitude would so criticise him. To no one would he yield in loyalty to the cause of Foreign Missions, but to him it was simply a question of procedure. The great world outside was the objective, but the immediate base was the Canadian West. And no amount of devotion to the work in China could atone, in his opinion, for neglect of Canada; and no amount of zeal for work in the Foreign field would recover the ground lost to the Kingdom of Heaven through indifference to the needs of Canada. This was his attitude, and it is an attitude perfectly reasonable and one easily understood.

In this his last Assembly, Dr. Robertson is the prime mover in a number of causes. He presses and carries through an overture signed by Drs. Herdman, Herridge, Somerville, Mr. Carmichael, Mr. Gordon, and others in regard to the training of men for Home Mission work, the final issue of which is the establishment of the Minister Evangelist Course now in operation in Manitoba College. He supports the overtures that result in the erection of the new Presbyteries of Dauphin, Qu'Appelle, and Prince Albert.

At the very close of the Assembly he presents the report of the Church and Manse Building Fund. It is the last report to be presented to the Assembly. Members and officials are crowding work through with almost unseemly haste, when the Superintendent rises to make his last address to the house. The moments are precious and he knows it, and not one of them does he waste. With the old fire and with unabated vigour, he recounts the work accomplished by this Fund. The Assembly, forgetting its weariness and its impatience, listens with delighted interest to the hurrying stream of statistics and stories, and to his final passionate appeal on behalf of his beloved West. In moving the resolution adopting the report, Dr. Herridge takes occasion to say that no more fitting climax to the Assembly's work can be found. Principal Grant, in seconding the resolution, speaks in the same strain, closing with the significant and prophetic quotation *finis coronat opus.*

His Assembly work is done, but there remain a few weeks into which he can crowd some further service to his Church and to his country. In August he sets off for a tour of the West. Through the Presbyteries of Kamloops, Kootenay, Edmonton, and Calgary, he goes, himself a veritable flying column, optimistic, buoyant as ever ; counselling, cheering on his brethren with never a word of complaint in regard to himself, and with only now and then a suggestion of failing strength. Of his Calgary visit his old friend, Dr. Herdman, a man of his own kidney and dear to his heart, thus writes :

"His last visit to Calgary was September 18th to 20th of 1901. I handed him a bundle of letters which had accumulated for him—sixty-six in all ! The Home Mission Committee of the Synod of British Columbia was in session, and one of the meetings lasted till two o'clock in the morning. Next day Dr. Lafferty called to give him a well considered warning against overtaxing his small capital of health. He was at once impressed and grateful, and more than once referred to the excellent nature of the advice, on our way to Winnipeg.

"The train should have reached Winnipeg early in the evening, but it was just one o'clock when we got to our destination. At the station he found two students awaiting him, having arrangements about travelling to make, which only he could effect for them. The better part of an hour was consumed in this way, during which time my duty was to keep the hotel bus waiting. For no other man would it have waited, but the name of Dr. Robertson prevailed with passengers and bus drivers, and when he at last appeared, none but kindly greetings awaited him all round, though it was now nearly two in the morning. When we reached the hotel I gasped to see the hotel clerk hand him a bundle of letters ; and when I met him next morning at breakfast, I found to my consternation that he had not only read the letters, but 'Although,' as he said apologetically, 'my hope was that I might be able to follow Dr. Lafferty's friendly advice,' he had found several of them so urgent, and dealing with matters so long delayed, that he had been compelled by a sense of duty to take most of the few hours that remained of the night, and reply at once. This was how between us all we worked our Superintendent of Missions."

In October he is in Toronto for the meeting of the Executive of the Assembly's Committee, and immediately upon its close hurries to complete his tour of the West. By November 7th he is on the east-bound train, busy with correspondence. Here is a letter of instructions, terse, crisp, pulsing with life and feeling which he addresses to Mr. Gordon :

"You can scarcely imagine—vivid as your imagination is—how disappointed and flabbergasted I was to-day to find you had gone out of town ; there were sheaves of things I wished to discuss with you. But let me give you first a list of men expected and where it is suggested that they be sent." Then follows a list of names with directions as to fields, his judgment in regard to salaries, instructions as to leaflets and Synod Fund, after which the letter proceeds : "In presenting the Home Mission report, get the Committee to recommend

"1. That the Synod instruct all congregations and missions to contribute to the Fund.

"2. That the Synod direct attention to the need of more missionaries, and men better suited for the work.

"3. Let missions like those I have indicated to you, be frankly told that they must shift for themselves.

"To save Fund, let an Executive of the Home Mission and Augmentation be appointed to meet in the autumn.

"J. R.

"P. S. Apologize to Committee and Synod for my absence ; tell them how sincerely I regret not meeting my brethren, but that it was inevitable." He never met with them again.

The rest of November he spends in a Home Mission campaign, in company with the Rev. J. A. Macdonald and Mr. John Penman of Paris. The last month of the year and of his life is packed full, the Sabbaths with public services, the days between with journeys, addresses, and correspondence.

On Sabbath, November 24th, on his way to address the Parkdale congregation, he has a fall which almost renders him insensible. He makes his way to a doctor, bruised and bleeding, but after being bandaged, he insists on fulfilling his engagement and that same afternoon addresses Westminster Sabbath-school. Remonstrances are in vain. He never has broken an appointment while able to stand. From his shoulder to his finger-tips, he is black and blue; his arm is useless, but next Sabbath he is preaching in Brampton, Cheltenham, and Mt. Pleasant. On Tuesday following he addresses the Toronto Presbytery and, as he tells his old friend, Dr. Farquharson, "stated a few plain things to them about the treatment they were meting out to Home Mission and Augmentation, and tried to shame them, etc.," with some effect, evidently, for a number of the brethren ask him for a synopsis of his address to be used with their people. The following Sabbath he is preaching in Paris, Farringdon and Zion Church, Brantford. The Sabbath after, he keeps an appointment, made three weeks before, and addresses Westminster congregation, Toronto, in its morning service.

"I shall never forget his appearance," writes Rev. John Neil, "when he came into the vestry before the service. He had a bandage over one eye, and his appearance indicated that he had been passing through some trying experiences. He said, 'Dr. Warden insisted upon my not coming this morning, but when I make an engagement I am always determined, if possible, to carry it out. I hope your congregation will not resent my coming in this form.' I have heard him frequently, both in the pulpit and on the platform, and at the meetings of our General Assembly and other Church courts, but I never heard him speak with more power than that Sabbath morning. It was perhaps the most comprehensive address I ever heard him deliver."

Writing to Dr. Farquharson of his experience in Westminster Church that day, he says:

"Yesterday I addressed Mr. Neil's congregation in the forenoon, Mr. Frizzell's in the evening. A man came up to me at the close of the forenoon service and offered me $250, and Mr. Neil's people are going to work to raise at least $1,250 by way of special help—so Dr. Warden told me to-day. I am going to disable the other shoulder and get my other eye blackened."

He does better in Mr. Neil's church than he knows, for as a result of that address the Fund is richer by $2,000.

And yet in spite of this terrific pace, such is the extraordinary vitality of the man, that he appears not only to be holding his own, but to be even improving in health. But it is not the vitality of physical strength, it is the flaming fire of his invincible spirit that gives to his emaciated and weakening body the energy and the glow of health.

During the week following his appearance at Westminster, he addresses Central Church, Hamilton. He has two Sabbaths left of the year and of his life. He will make a fair division of them. One he will give to his life's work, pleading his great cause before the congregations of Appin and Glencoe, the other, the 29th of December, he will give—oh, reckless prodigality!—to his wife and family.

Historic Kildonan Churchyard Where a Number of the Western Pioneers Are Buried

The next three days he remains quietly at home, filling up the hours with correspondence as his strength will permit, for he is rapidly failing. It is Saturday, the 4th of January. In the midst of a letter the stupor of his disease now and then overcomes him. He rouses himself to continue, till at length his hitherto unconquered spirit surrenders. He turns to his wife and, with a word strange upon his lips, "I am done out," he sinks into slumber. The long day is done; the night has come! And also the morning!

The Church authorities come to proffer their loving offices in the last service it is permitted men to render to their honoured dead. A public funeral is proposed, but the wife, heart-stricken and "jealous" of her rights in that dear dust, will not hear of it. He is hers now at last, and only hers, and she will hold him hers to the end. But this only for a moment. Of her life's long sacrifice but a poor fragment remains to offer. He is hers, yes, but he belongs to his Church as well, and if his Church asks the privilege of rendering this last loving tribute, she will not interpose. She will make perfect her sacrifice.

At the house a small company of close friends gather. The great words of the immortal hope are read. There is a prayer for pity and comfort, a prayer of grateful thanksgiving as well, and he is carried forth from the home which has been his so little.

In and about Bloor Street Church a great concourse of the people have assembled. Dr. Wallace, the minister of the church, presides and reads the Scripture. The Rev. J. A. Macdonald offers the prayers of the people. Songs of hope and triumph lift their hearts to God. The Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev. Dr. Warden, pays the tribute of the Church's love and gratitude. The

Rev. C. W. Gordon speaks the word that tells the grief of the men of the West, their loving pride in their dead chief, their gratitude for his work, their joy in his triumph. The people pass in a long-drawn file to look upon his face upturned and still. Alas! alas! he is dead! No message more from those pallid lips! Then they bear him out to his place in Mount Pleasant Cemetery.

But he is of the West. In the West his life is sown; in the West the harvest will wave, and so upon the field of his labour and of his triumph his dust must find its last abode. To Winnipeg—how different from that "clustering variegation of shops and shacks" that greeted him twenty-eight years ago—and thence to old Kildonan, he is borne, and there in that sacred field of the dead those who loved him best and wrought with him longest, laid him down. Beside him Nisbet, Black, and a little further, King, a noble company for whom Western Canada might well thank God. There let them sleep together, their dust possessing this wide land and claiming it for God and things eternal, their spirits living in the unshrinking faith and unconquered love of those who, hearing of their deeds, shall find within their own hearts a fire that will consume until all dross of self is gone and only the love of God and man abides.

XXXIV

MEMORIALS

IT is neither fitting nor necessary to reproduce here the many resolutions recording the admiration, esteem, and affection for the Superintendent of Missions and the many expressions of regret at his early death—he was only sixty-three—from Church courts and Committees, nor is it necessary to publish any of the scores of letters from distinguished citizens of Canada and from humbler friends, breathing love and gratitude for his public services to the nation as well as for his personal qualities. But it seems right that here there should be found a place for a few of these expressions that embody the sentiments of those who wrought with him in official relations in different parts of Canada. There have been selected these four. The first is from the farthest west of all the Presbyteries, the Presbytery of Westminster :

"The Presbytery of Westminster having learned with profound regret of the death of Rev. Dr. James Robertson, Superintendent of Missions in Manitoba, the Northwest, and British Columbia, desires to place on record its deep sense of the loss the Church has sustained.

"For twenty years the leader and representative of the Church in the outposts of the rapidly-advancing frontier of our Western civilization, he endured cheerfully the hardships of pioneer life and discharged with splendid fidelity and magnificent success the arduous duties of his important but difficult position.

"Possessing in rare combination the statesman's outlook and the prophet's fervour, and animated by an unfaltering confidence in our country's future, he formed his plans with a far-sighted wisdom that the course of events has abundantly justified, and bringing to the performance of his great work the admirable qualities of mind and heart for which he was distinguished, and displaying the highest type of true patriotism as well as the most attractive form of Christian service, he laid broad and deep the foundations of national and religious life in the western half of the Dominion of Canada.

"A man of heroic mould, but of tenderest heart, charitable in his judgments of men, generous and sympathetic in his dealings with them, he was himself a living embodiment of that Gospel which he preached as the only hope for the individual or the nation.

"His whole career was an exemplification of the spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice which he expected to see manifested by the servants of the Church whose work he was appointed to superintend. Genial and kindly in his disposition, and keeping himself in closest touch with the world's best thought, his visits to the homes of the missionaries, living in isolated positions and doing their work under many discouragements, were a source of keenest delight and an inspiration to nobler effort.

"While mourning his loss, the Presbytery gratefully recognizes that the story of his life will form one of the brightest pages in the Church's history, and expresses the conviction that the future of the country will show with increasing clearness the impress of his marked individuality.

"To the sorrowing members of his bereaved household the Presbytery begs to extend its respectful sympathy, commending them to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforteth us in all our tribulations."

There was one body of men with whom, more than any other, Dr. Robertson was closely associated in his life-work, and that body was the Home Mission Committee of the Synod of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. He was its first and only Convener, and twice a year for seventeen years the Superintendent met with this Committee to formulate policy and to make plans and to discuss ways and means; and every year of their work together strengthened the bonds that bound them, till they became, indeed, a band of brothers. It was not his official position as head of the Committee, but his personal qualities that drew and held their love and confidence. There is no word in this resolution but properly carries with it its full weight of meaning:

"It is with deep sorrow and an overwhelming sense of loss that we, the members of the Synod's Home Mission Committee of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories, deplore the absence from our Committee to-day and from henceforth, of our Convener, the Rev. Dr. Robertson, Superintendent of Missions. This Committee has never known another Convener, for since its organization in the year 1884, seventeen years ago, Dr. Robertson has guided our councils and presided at our deliberations. During the twenty-one years of Dr. Robertson's superintendency, the Home Mission work of our Church in Western Canada has developed with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of Christian missions, so that the one Presbytery of 1881, with its four congregations and eighteen missions, has developed into eighteen Presbyteries with 141 congregations and 226 missions, giving service at 1,130 points; and to-day in the Canada that lies west of the Lakes, we have the foundations of a great Church laid solidly and well.

"We, whose privilege it has been to be associated with Dr. Robertson in this work, know in a measure how much these remarkable results have, under God, been due to the statesmanlike leading and to the untiring personal labours of our late Convener. But neither we, nor the Church as a whole, will ever be able fully to estimate the value of the service he gave in this Western country, nor how much our country owes to Dr. Robertson's fervent patriotism and wise administration.

"For his position and his work Dr. Robertson was thoroughly furnished. To his strong common sense and sound judgment he added a genius for administration, for the selecting of men, and for the mastery of detail, a singleness of aim, and a true sympathy with his fellow-workers; and thus it was that he was able to gain and to hold, and ever more and more firmly, the confidence and the admiring affection of those who shared with him in his toil. How often at this table have we been stimulated by his faith, cheered by his hope and courage, rebuked by his surpassing self-devotion, and encouraged by his sympathy. To-day we mourn not only the leader who has so surely shown us the way, but the friend and brother to whom our hearts were knit with true and tender ties.

"The loss the Church has sustained in the death of Dr. Robertson is greater than we know. Our loss, as a Committee, and that personal loss which we each feel in our own lives by his removal, we are not yet able to measure; but with the Church we bow in humble submission to the will of God, in the faith that the influence of that strenuous and devoted life will long abide in the whole Church, and especially in this section of it to which he gave his life; and that we who laboured with him will continue to feel the uplifting influence of his splendid and heroic self-devotion. And we earnestly pray that the same Lord who so richly endowed His servant and gave him to us these many years, will not forsake the work just begun, but will continue it to the end.

"To the bereaved wife and family we offer our sincere and respectful sympathy. We measure the greatness of their loss by our own, and pray for them the consolation of the Divine Grace, and abiding presence of Him who has declared Himself to be the husband of the widow and the father of the fatherless."

The Church and Manse Building Fund owed its existence to Dr. Robertson, and this Fund under his administration became a means of blessing to Western Canada greater than can be estimated. With the members of the Board intrusted with the interests of this Fund, the Superintendent of Missions kept in close and cordial relation, and hence this resolution properly finds its place with the others:

"At its first meeting after the lamented death of the late Rev. James Robertson, D. D., Superintendent of Missions, the Church and Manse Building Board wishes to place upon record its recognition of the importance of his services in its department of the Church work, and its sense of the loss sustained in his removal.

"Dr. Robertson was the founder of this Fund. He collected nearly all the money which constitutes its endowment, he recommended from his personal knowledge a very large number of the loans and grants which it made, he advocated the enlargement of the sphere of its operations so as to include, as it now does, British Columbia and a large portion of New Ontario, and in general his assistance was invaluable in administering its business because of the extent of his information, the sanity of his judgment and the depth of his interest in the work. The success of this Fund which has dotted the West with churches and manses will be an enduring monument of the enthusiasm, the strenuousness and the far ambition of Dr. Robertson's life."

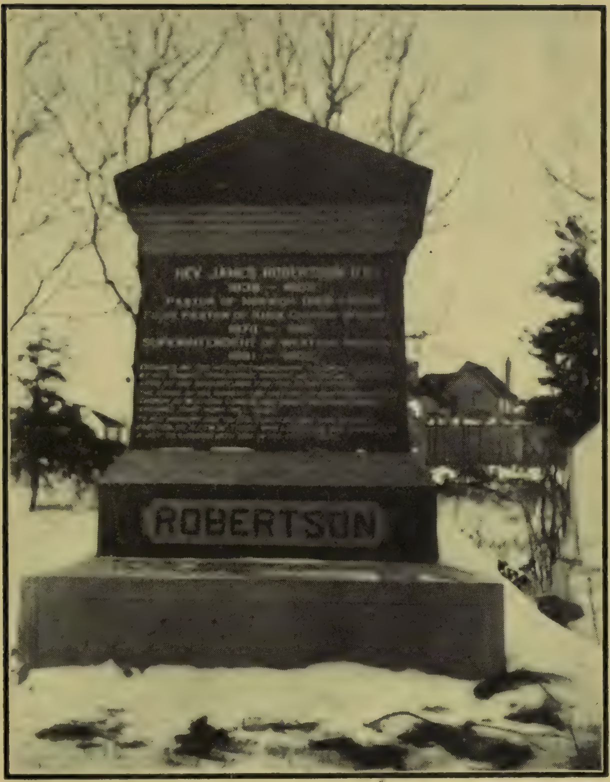
The following is the resolution by the General

Assembly's Home Mission Committee (Western Section). It was composed of those who stood among the very ablest men in the Church. It was the Committee under whose authority the Superintendent of Missions worked, and there is no more striking testimony to the quality of his work and the character of the man than the increasing hold the Superintendent gained upon the confidence of the Committee whose servant he was. And as the members of this Committee came to see more clearly the single-hearted devotion and the sane and sound judgment of their Superintendent, the more there grew up in their hearts a profound affection for him, and a willingness to be guided by his counsel.

"The Home Mission Committee (Western Section) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, at its first meeting after his decease, does hereby record its sense of the noble character and splendid achievements of the late Rev. James Robertson, D. D.

"Appointed by the Church in hesitation and doubt to the office of Superintendent of Missions for Manitoba and the Northwest, in 1881, he lived to enjoy every honour the Church could bestow, and to behold, amid the marvellous development of the Canadian West, largely as the result of his own efforts, the cause of religion militant everywhere, and flourishing in almost every part.

"In the West, by his wonderful versatility, he gained the respect and confidence of every class of the population. Amid farms, or ranches, or mines, or villages, or cities, he was equally known and venerated. He was always looked upon as a hero, of the type the West is proud of, and spent himself in tireless labours for the spiritual welfare of that vast region. A loyal Presbyterian, he was no sectarian. He wanted the West for righteousness and the fear of God.



Dr. Robertson's Grave in
the Kildonan Churchyard

"To the missionaries under his superintendence he was a comrade and most welcome adviser. A visit from him was a stirring of hope and energy and trust in God. Quick to condemn sloth and mismanagement, he was yet quicker to sympathize with genuine misfortune and eager to relieve it.

"In the older portions of the Church in Canada, and across the Atlantic, he was known as an enthusiast in his work. It was due to his frank and pressing appeals that the money was raised for extending the territory of Home Missions, and equipping the fields with churches, manses, and pastors.

"It is a satisfaction to this Committee to remember the perfect harmony and cheerfulness with which he and its members co-laboured. While the docile servant of the Committee, he was at the same time its chief leader and ruler. Knowing the difficulties best, he was yet the most ardent and progressive spirit of all.

"We praise God that He gave our Church such an apostle, and recognize the Divine kindness which called him to his reward. While we feel the human impossibility of filling his place, we remember that he in our position would be undaunted, and face with confidence the task of carrying on the immense enterprise which he began, and has left magnificently incomplete. We pray for faith as we recall some of his last words, 'The next few years are critical in this work. The night cometh.'

"This Committee would convey to the family their tender sympathy in the sorrow into which they have been plunged, and pray that the God of all grace and consolation may be to them a present and abiding refuge."

For many years the Presbytery of Calgary formed the western limit of the Superintendent's mission field, and the history of no other Presbytery in the West is so full of the romance of missions. The Home Mission Committee of that Presbytery, under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Herdman, who himself became afterwards one of the Superintendents of Missions for the Western Church, was always the pride of the Superintendent's heart. Between these two men there existed from first to last the very strongest ties of personal affection and esteem. It is not surprising, therefore, that upon the wall of Dr. Herdman's church this tablet should hang :

"*In*
recognition of the
worth and work of the
Rev. James Robertson, D. D.,
Superintendent of
Presbyterian Home Missions
from 1881 to 1902,
This tablet
in a church and city situated
centrally among missions, is
erected conjointly by Presbytery
and congregation.

"'*Let no man glory in men, for all*
things are yours, whether Paul, or
Apollos, or Cephas.'

"*Canada, West of the Great Lakes, was his mission field.*"

In the cemetery of old Kildonan, above the grave that holds his dust, there stands a block of granite bearing this inscription :

"*Rev. James Robertson, D. D.,*
1839–1902
Pastor of Norwich 1869–1874
First Pastor of Knox Church, Winnipeg,
1874–1881
Superintendent of Western Missions
1881–1902

> "*Endowed by God with extraordinary talents, entrusted*
> *by his Church with unique powers, he used all for the*
> *good of his country and for the glory of God. The*
> *story of his work is the history of the Presbyterian*
> *Church in Western Canada, and while Western Canada*
> *endures, that work will abide.*
> *To his memory and to the Glory of God this stone*
> *is erected by a few of those who loved him and*
> *counted it a joy to labour with him in his great work.*"

That monument of granite will become dust, blown by passing winds, but coeval with Time the monument of his Life will stand to the glory of His name who made him what he was.

BV Gordon, Charles William
2813 The life of James
R6G6 Robertson

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